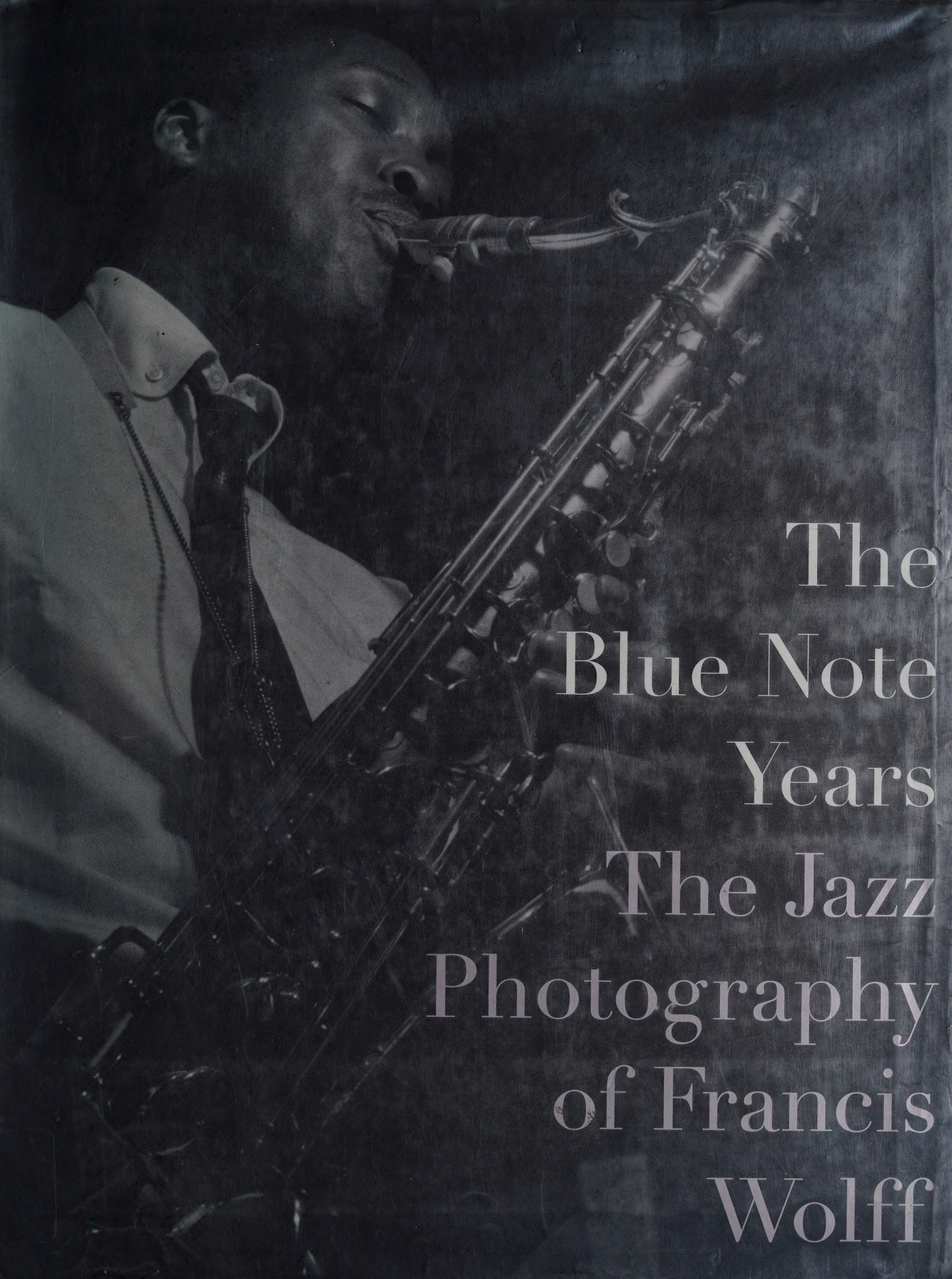

The Blue Note Years
The Jazz Photography of Francis Wolff

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The Jazz Photography of Francis Wolff

Michael Cuscuna, Charlie Lourie and Oscar Schnider
with a foreword by Herbie Hancock

From 1941 to 1965, Francis Wolff took thousands of photographs during the rehearsals and recording sessions that made Blue Note Records the world's most famous jazz label. Many of those photographs were used on Blue Note's graphically striking album covers, but most of Wolff's work has never been seen by the public. This book presents over two hundred of Wolff's photographs—many previously unpublished—of the jazz legends immortalized in Blue Note recordings.

These candid photographs capture John Coltrane in the famous "Blue Train" session, Horace Silver recording "Song For My Father," and many other Blue Note artists, such as Miles Davis, Jimmy Smith, Clifford Brown, Art Blakey, Lou Donaldson, and Grant Green.

The text tells the personal history of Blue Note Records, from its founding by Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff, to their critical discovery of recording master Rudy Van Gelder, and the stories behind many of the label's best-loved recordings. A valuable reference section provides biographical data on the artists and the names and dates of the sessions at which the photos were taken.

Jazz aficionados and admirers of fine-art photography will value this book for its luxurious first-time presentation of Francis Wolff's work, the jazz history revealed in the text, and the tangible spirit of the era captured in these stunning images.

◄
Hank Mobley
HANK MOBLEY QUARTET
Hackensack, NJ
1955

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RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

Dedicated to

Francis Wolff, Alfred Lion, and all the musicians who recorded for Blue Note Records.

Special thanks to

Ruth Lion for her faith and confidence in allowing us to be the caretakers of this great treasure;
Lisa Cuscuna for the time, care, and intelligence she has put into archiving this collection, and for her keen eyes and invaluable input;
Rene Yoshina for masterfully guiding the process of bringing this book to fruition;
Laura Eitzen for realizing our vision of it;
Ann Eitzen for her assistance in thoughtfully editing the photographs;
Lenny Lum for his high-quality printmaking;
and our editor Katherine Adzima for her insightful guidance, objectivity, and enthusiasm in shaping the text.

First published in the United States of America in 1995 by
RIZZOLI INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS, INC.
300 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010

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Reprinted 2001 2002

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

Cuscuna, Michael.
The Blue Note years: the jazz photography of Francis Wolff/Michael Cuscuna: introduction by Charlie Lourie: foreword by Herbie Hancock.
p. cm.
ISBN 0-8478-1912-4
1. Blue Note (Firm)—Pictorial works. 2. Jazz—Pictorial works. 3. Jazz musicians—Pictorial works. I. Wolff, Francis. II. Title.
ML3506.C87 1995
781.65'0973—dc20 95-7383
CIP
MN

Design by Oscar Schnider Design, Inc., New York, NY

Printed and bound in China

FOREWORD

Herbie Hancock

I came to New York in 1961 to work with Donald Byrd. Donald used me on several of his Blue Note sessions that year, and I got to know Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff—the men who were Blue Note. I knew that Blue Note was the hottest label at the time. When Alfred and Frank asked me to make my own album for the label a year later, I jumped at the chance. I felt very lucky and proud to be recording on that label.

The sixties were an exciting time for jazz. Alfred and Frank were consistently producing albums that were cornerstones, that caught the whole spirit of modern and post-modern jazz. Blue Note was exposing the talents of a lot of young musicians, who became influential leaders in their own right. It influenced the whole jazz scene.

Alfred and Frank were both totally involved with the music. I don't ever remember them bragging about what they had done or focusing any attention on themselves. Their whole strategy was to present this music to the people and capture the spirit of true jazz improvisation and the youthful vitality that was so important in jazz. When something was really grooving in the studio, you would see Frank and Alfred bouncing around with broad smiles on their faces, doing a funny little dance. Then you knew that the music was finally in the pocket where it should be.

Frank would always shoot when we were rehearsing in the studio. He was never in the way. You weren't aware that he was taking pictures—they were never posed shots. On the contrary, he was a part of the very inspirational environment that was a Blue Note recording session.

FRANK WOULD ALWAYS SHOOT WHEN WE WERE REHEARSING IN THE STUDIO. HE WAS NEVER IN THE WAY. YOU WEREN'T AWARE THAT HE WAS TAKING PICTURES—THEY WERE NEVER POSED SHOTS. ON THE CONTRARY, HE WAS A PART OF THE VERY INSPIRATIONAL ENVIRONMENT THAT WAS A BLUE NOTE RECORDING SESSION.

At the time, I was very young and concerned only with my music and the music scene. Looking back though, I realize that Frank was an excellent photographer. He's taken great photographs of some of the giants of jazz. His images of the musicians at work are so relaxed and intimate that they capture the spirit not just of the moment, but also the era.

Frank was very easy-going and didn't talk very much. He pretty much stayed in the background, but there was an underlying strength to his presence, as if he didn't really need to say any more than he did. He had a sly, pleasant little smile on his face all the time. With few words, just his presence, one was always aware of his warmth and his respect for the music. The photographs speak for themselves.

Hank Mobley, Alfred Lion
SOUL STATION
Hank Mobley
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

INTRODUCTION

Charlie Lourie

On January 6, 1939, German emigré Alfred Lion entered a New York City recording studio and made a series of masterful recordings with boogie-woogie pianists Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis. In the process, Blue Note Records was created. During the next twenty-eight years, Lion produced one of the most visionary and artistically successful bodies of work in the history of the record business. The level of expression, the recorded sound, the graphics, and the courageous stretching of boundaries made Blue Note a distinct beacon in the documentation of jazz. It profoundly affected the lives of tens of thousands. Its excellence inspired most of today's leaders in the jazz record business to do what they do. And in the case of Michael Cuscuna and me, it literally shaped the direction our lives would take. We met at Blue Note in 1975, when I hired Michael to research the vaults for the wealth of unreleased material that was rumored to exist. We became friends, and ultimately created Mosaic Records in 1982, largely as a home for Blue Note masters which were neglected after the label became a moribund corporate casualty.

THE LEVEL OF EXPRESSION, THE RECORDED SOUND, THE GRAPHICS, AND THE COURAGEOUS STRETCHING OF BOUNDARIES MADE BLUE NOTE A DISTINCT BEACON IN THE DOCUMENTATION OF JAZZ.

One spring morning in 1983, a letter arrived. We opened it quite excitedly, since the handwriting on its envelope was as familiar to us as our own—years of examining hundreds of tape boxes with notes or contents scrawled on the back had embedded its distinctive look indelibly in our minds. It was the hand of Alfred Lion, who had by then been retired and incommunicado from the jazz world for sixteen years. Michael and I had just launched Mosaic. Since two of Mosaic's first three sets consisted of Blue Note masters, Alfred had written to find out who we were and what rights we had to release Blue Note recordings. Under ordinary circumstances the receipt of such a letter would be a routine occurrence requiring only a perfunctory letter of explanation. But these circumstances were hardly ordinary.

Alfred and his partner Frank Wolff had sold Blue Note to Liberty Records in 1966. A year later, Alfred retired for health reasons, severing all his ties to the jazz community and dropping completely out of sight. The only relationship he continued to maintain was with his close friend Horace Silver, who, out of respect for Alfred's wish for privacy, never divulged his whereabouts. As the years passed and appreciation grew for the consistent brilliance of his life's work, Alfred's status as both a visionary seeker of talent and a sensitive and savvy producer of that talent attained the level of legend.

Thrilled by a direct communiqué from Alfred Lion, Michael and I wrote back and explained our new company, expressed our respect and admiration for all he had accomplished, and sent copies of Mosaic's Thelonious Monk and Albert Ammons & Meade Lux Lewis sets. Both collections contained some of Blue Note's most historic recordings, but the latter, we knew, would be particularly important to Alfred, since it reconstructed his first recording session, which indeed was the genesis of Blue Note Records.

A few weeks later a collect telephone call came in from Alfred to Michael. They talked for a long while, at first tentatively, then gradually more animatedly. It was a moving experience to watch Michael, who had become the world's pre-eminent Blue Note authority, at last have the opportunity to speak with the man who created it all—to actually hear Alfred's voice with its pronounced German accent, and to ask some of the questions that had been gnawing at him for most of his life. In a large sense, it was a grown son talking for the first time to the father he'd never met.

After that first conversation Alfred telephoned often, and Michael and I each developed a warm friendship with him. Although in frail health due to a bad heart, his mind was razor-sharp, open to the new, and insatiably curious. We had hour-long conversations about music (he had a high regard for Prince), the machinations of today's record business (he liked his era better), medicine (he was experimenting with chelation therapy), and many other subjects. Alfred was a wonderful man to talk to—full of ideas, energy, warmth, good humor, and brimming with an infectious joie de vivre.

During the first year and a half, our relationship was carried on clandestinely, at least as far as Alfred's wife, Ruth, was concerned. It was at the beginning of the second phone call when Alfred declared in a low, childlike whisper, "Ruth's

gone out for a while, I can talk now," that we began to realize why he'd become jazz's Judge Crater.

Ruth Mason was, and still is, a woman of great beauty, both inside and out. She joined Blue Note as the head of publicity after a successful stint as a New York jazz radio personality. In 1966, after being together for eleven years, she and Alfred were married. They loved each other deeply and were extremely supportive and protective of one another. One of Ruth's greatest concerns was that Alfred would succumb to a heart attack if they continued their stressful lifestyle. She convinced him to completely abandon the jazz life and move to Cuernavaca, Mexico, where they lived happy, quiet, healthy lives for twelve years. In 1979, concerned that Alfred would soon require better medical facilities than were available to them in Mexico, they returned to the States and settled in the Rancho Bernardo section of San Diego.

For years Alfred remained true to his commitment to Ruth and avoided contact with the old life, except to stay in touch with Horace, who kept him up to date on old friends and new music. But seeing a New York Times review of our Ammons/Lewis and Thelonious Monk sets stirred passionate memories and prompted him to contact us. That letter and telephone call started him on the road to a reemergence, which Ruth was later to estimate added two wonderful years to his life.

In 1984, the current Blue Note owners, Capitol Records, secured the considerable talents of Bruce Lundvall, in part to reactivate the label as a major force in jazz. As a means of garnering worldwide publicity for the relaunching, Lundvall devised the idea of a major Town Hall concert, which would feature many of the previous stars of Blue Note along with the label's new crop of signings. He asked Michael, whom he had hired as a label consultant, to plan the program, oversee the concert production, and produce the eventual recordings and home videos. At some point the happy, but far-fetched thought arose to invite Alfred and Ruth to the event, perhaps even as guests of honor. Telegrams from Michael and Bruce were sent, and three days later, to everyone's astonishment, the Lions accepted the invitation.

When Alfred and Ruth arrived in New York, it was to a hero's welcome. The major press sought them out for interviews and old friends and associates clamored for a portion of their limited time in the Big Apple. But the moments of highest drama occurred when Alfred visited the rehearsals, where he was greeted for the first time in almost two decades by the great artists whose careers he had helped launch—artists who were now members of the jazz pantheon, such as Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, Stanley Turrentine, Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Henderson, Tony Williams, McCoy Tyner, Jackie McLean, Woody Shaw, Art Blakey, Johnny Griffin, Jimmy Smith, Lou Donaldson, Kenny Burrell, Ron Carter, and Curtis Fuller. The air was thick with emotion, and the deference and respect these men of great egos paid to Alfred after all those years was palpable evidence of his importance to their lives.

NOT LONG BEFORE HE DIED, ALFRED SAID, "YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE FRIENDS IN YOUR LIFE, BUT MAYBE ONLY ONE *FRIEND*, REALLY. FRANK WAS THAT PERSON FOR ME."

At the end of a whirlwind week, on February 22, 1985, Alfred and Ruth walked onto the stage of Town Hall and were greeted by a sustained, thunderous, standing ovation by the sold-out house. I believe Alfred was a modest man who gave no thought to the importance or lasting value of his work. Like many men of remarkable accomplishment, he did it simply because he loved doing it. But on that night, with the jazz elite literally at his feet, he and Ruth experienced for the first time how the world felt about him. And as they say, there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

The concert was a singular success and Bruce's vision of a worldwide publicity bonanza was fully realized. Press coverage was intense in major cities around the globe. When stories hit the Japanese media, the Japanese television network, NTV, took immediate notice. They were looking for a concept for a one-time-only jazz event that they could later televise. Impressed by the passion and excitement generated by the Town Hall event, plus the substantial sales of Blue Note recordings in Japan, they decided on a festival built around Blue Note. They hired Michael, the creative force behind the Town Hall concert, to produce a three-day, five-concert Blue Note festival to take place in late August, 1986, at a gorgeous site on Lake Yamanaka at the foot of Mt. Fuji. And, taking another page out of the Town Hall program, they invited Alfred and Ruth to come to Japan as the festival's guests of honor.

That first Fuji festival (it became an annual event, and 1995 was the tenth!) was a magical event. The setting, with magnificent Mt. Fuji looming ever-present over the site, had a spiritual aura to it, and the artists responded by digging deep into their souls for music of extraordinary beauty. The audience contributed mightily as well. Where else but in Japan can one see a field packed with fifteen thousand teens and twentysomethings roar with excited recognition at the first four bars of Sonny Clark's "Cool Struttin"? We were all in jazz heaven.

It was in this context that Alfred, in increasingly failing health, and Ruth stepped once again onto a stage to receive plaudits from an adoring public. And adoring it was. If they were received as heroes in New York, their visit to Japan was a virtual Second Coming.

Alfred's reaction to all of this swung from shock to ecstasy—shock from his disbelief that he had traveled halfway around the world and was being celebrated in such a manner, ecstasy at the realization that it was actually happening. That his life's work was being acknowledged and validated. That he had made a difference.

That weekend in Japan, Alfred took his last bow. He went home to San Diego, had more interviews, talked to various people who wanted to write histories of Blue Note, and continued to call us in Connecticut, although no longer secretly. On February 2, 1987, at the age of seventy-eight, his heart finally gave out. Obituaries appeared all over the world, and in Los Angeles and New York the jazz community gathered to pay homage to a good man. He was buried in a cemetery in Paramus, New Jersey, just a few yards from the grave of his friend, Francis Wolff.

Which brings us to Francis and the photographs at hand. Not long before he died, Alfred said, "You know, you have friends in your life, but maybe only one *friend,* really. Frank was that person for me."

They had met as young boys in Berlin, where they lived in the same neighborhood, and became friends upon the discovery of their mutual love of jazz. The friendship deepened and lasted for almost fifty years.

Frank became a professional photographer in Germany, and after joining Alfred at Blue Note late in 1939, it was only natural for him to bring his camera to recording sessions. During more than thirty years as a label executive he photographed almost every Blue Note session. In doing so, he amassed a vast library of images, which reveal him to be a brilliant and masterful artist in his own right. (And as an immense bonus for posterity, there is no more important body of work in recording history that can boast such thorough visual documentation as the recording sessions of Blue Note Records.) At first, Frank shot purely for the love of it. But with the advent of the LP era, and the attendant need for cover art, his work as a photographer became a vital resource for the label. His photographs came to be a distinctive element of hundreds of album covers, which helped to define the unique Blue Note gestalt. But the requirements of album graphics, publicity photos, and print ads utilized only a tiny fraction of the totality of his work. The rest of this photographic treasure trove, literally thousands of breathtaking images, was simply filed away by session in manila envelopes and never seen again by anyone.

WOLFF'S PHOTOGRAPHS CAME TO BE A DISTINCTIVE ELEMENT OF HUNDREDS OF ALBUM COVERS, WHICH HELPED TO DEFINE THE UNIQUE BLUE NOTE GESTALT.

When the Lions retired in 1967, Frank packed the complete Blue Note photographic archive into a four-foot-long, three-foot-wide, three-foot-high carton and shipped it to Alfred in Cuernavaca. It was a gift that deeply touched Alfred, but it was also fraught with the pain of separation from his lifelong friend. Alfred could not bring himself to open the box, and simply stored it in his guest house, where it remained during his entire twelve-year stay in Mexico. After the move to Rancho Bernardo in 1979, the box was put in a garage. And there it sat, still unopened, until early 1986. It was then that Alfred, in a moment of utter poignancy, offered to let us use the photographs to illustrate our Mosaic booklets.

This was, of course, a spectacular windfall for us. But as unexpected as it was, it was probably predictable given Alfred's nature. After our initial gift to him, we continued to send him Mosaic sets of Blue Note reissues as they were released. In time Alfred began to grapple with the reality that our booklets would be immeasurably enhanced by the addition of

photographs from the actual sessions. When his lifelong compulsion to do things right finally overcame his powerful emotional resistance to confronting Frank's photographs, he made the offer. From that point on, the quality of our booklets took a quantum leap forward with the lavish inclusion of Frank's work.

THERE IS NO MORE IMPORTANT BODY OF WORK IN RECORDING HISTORY THAT CAN BOAST SUCH THOROUGH VISUAL DOCUMENTATION AS THE RECORDING SESSIONS OF BLUE NOTE RECORDS.

For a year, Alfred selected the shots and sent them to us. After his death, Ruth asked us to remove the collection to Connecticut in order to properly archive the priceless prints and negatives which had been languishing in manila envelopes for so many years, and to administrate their use. Ruth also had a strong conviction that Frank's talents should be more widely recognized, and she thought we might be able to help to achieve that.

Quite naturally, our first thought was to publish a book. What better way to focus worldwide attention on the art of Frank Wolff than with a major presentation of his work in art book form? But we quickly dropped the idea when the daunting realities of properly doing such a project became evident.

In October, 1993, we received the second fateful telephone call of this story. It was Oscar Schnider proposing a collaboration on precisely the book we wanted to do. We would write the text, and he would design a beautiful book that would communicate our shared enthusiasm for Frank's photography.

At that moment, all the lights went on. We were familiar with Oscar's work and had no question about his ability to create a book of unique beauty. He is a gifted designer who has a successful business performing high-level assignments for major corporations. In addition, he's had a lifelong love affair with jazz and derives much pleasure from a sort of pro bono sideline designing innovative graphics for jazz record companies and artists' managers who couldn't possibly afford his normal fees. In fact, the last few Mosaic brochures are the direct beneficiaries of his largesse. For Michael and me, having someone of Oscar's caliber involved meant the difference between total immobility and vigorous action to bring this book to fruition.

Finding a publisher at all, let alone a sensitive and responsive one, is often the most difficult and aggravating aspect of bringing a book to life. But the good fortune that blessed this project from the beginning continued in our first meeting with the people at Rizzoli. They had great respect for Blue Note's history, knew of Frank's photography, and had an instinctive appreciation for what we wanted to do.

There are many great characters in this story whose lives will have a positive and lasting impact on the music world and everyone affected by it. But this is Frank Wolff's book and it exists solely to celebrate his consumate artistry. I hope we've come close to doing it justice.

THE BLUE NOTE STORY

Michael Cuscuna

The marketing of works of art can be a thankless, often self-contradictory process. A memorable painting, a great piece of literature, a unique contribution to music, cannot by definition be conceived in terms of its commercial viability. Yet from time to time there have been men involved in the creation of masterpieces who in some recondite manner have managed to serve with distinction as middlemen between the artists and the public. That this can be accomplished, not only profitably but also with a clear conscience and a sense of uncompromised achievement, has never been illustrated more clearly than in the cases of Alfred Lion, who founded Blue Note Records, and (his partner) Francis Wolff.

So wrote the late critic Leonard Feather in 1971. I would only add that they were more than middlemen—they were inspired catalysts who helped much of the greatest jazz of the mid-twentieth century happen, and preserved it on tape.

By 1955, the eccentric, dedicated Blue Note label, then in its sixteenth year, was sinking under the weight of hard, financial realities in an ever-changing business. Alfred and Frank recorded the music that moved them, regardless of commercial considerations. Their recordings were impeccable and revered by critics. Sales, however, were not commensurate with quality.

Fortunately, that year what came to be known as the Blue Note sound was born, and it met with incredible public acceptance. The Blue Note sound was more than a musical style; it incorporated larger-than-life recorded sound, consummate taste in musicians, inspired planning sessions and rehearsals, and a final product that blended raw feeling with complex precision.

For the next twelve years, Blue Note sought out and recorded the cutting edge in jazz, and did it better and more carefully and caringly than any other company. From the seed of an idea to the final album with its distinctive graphics and photography, Lion and Wolff sought and usually achieved a perfection that is unparalleled in the record business. They grasped every artistic development in jazz at the time with fresh enthusiasm, and captured the best of it on Blue Note.

The years 1955, when Blue Note midwifed the hard bop sound, to 1967, when John Coltrane died and Miles Davis began edging toward fusion, were a most heady time for jazz. Never before or since was there such a vast and amazing pool of brilliant artists constantly interacting and expanding the music's boundaries. Naturally, there was an astonishing amount of jazz recording going on all the time during this period. But no one approached Alfred and Francis in consistency and quality. To this day, generation after generation of musicians consider the legacy of recorded masterpieces on Blue Note to be their first and most formative university.

THE BLUE NOTE SOUND WAS MORE THAN A MUSICAL STYLE; IT INCORPORATED LARGER-THAN-LIFE RECORDED SOUND, CONSUMMATE TASTE IN MUSICIANS, INSPIRED PLANNING SESSIONS AND REHEARSALS, AND A FINAL PRODUCT THAT BLENDED RAW FEELING WITH COMPLEX PRECISION.

Born and raised in Berlin, Alfred discovered the seduction of rhythm at an early age. "My parents took me on vacation to a resort when I was five. The hotel had a ballroom with a large dance orchestra and after my parents put me to bed, they went dancing. I'd get dressed and sneak down to the stage entrance of the ballroom. The musicians thought I was cute and let me in. They put me in the orchestra pit and I sat on the floor for hours next to the drummer. It was something, to feel that rhythm."

In 1924, at the age of fifteen, Alfred met Francis Wolff, who lived in the same neighborhood. They discovered a mutual passion for jazz and became good friends. That passion was to shape the fabric of their entire lives.

Shortly before his twentieth birthday in 1928, Alfred Lion decided to come to New York to get closer to the heart of the jazz scene. With no money and speaking little English, he slept in Central Park and worked loading trucks on the New York docks. When a fellow dock worker, who was not a fan of immigrant laborers, swung a board with a nail protruding from it into

Alfred's back, Alfred landed in the hospital for several weeks. The duress of his New York experiences drove him back to Germany.

Germany was in turmoil as the Nazi movement began to gather strength. Alfred and his mother moved to Chile in 1933, the year Hitler was appointed as chancellor. Alfred tried his hand (and almost lost it) as a lobster fisherman, while his mother worked for an import/export firm. Inexplicably, Francis Wolff, whose family was well-off, cultured, academic, and Jewish, stayed on in Berlin.

In 1937, Alfred got a job in an import/export company in New York—then, as now, the jazz capital of the world. At last, he was able to live and work under decent conditions amidst the music he loved so dearly.

BLUE NOTE ALWAYS PLACED QUALITY ABOVE THE BOTTOM LINE. SESSIONS NOT DEEMED UP TO BLUE NOTE STANDARDS WERE SHELVED REGARDLESS OF COST OR FINANCIAL DURESS.

On December 23, 1938, he attended the legendary "Spirituals To Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall. He was so moved by the pulsating, dazzling, boogie-woogie artistry of pianists Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, and Pete Johnson that he scraped up enough money for one day's rental on a studio. Exactly two weeks later on January 6, 1939, he recorded Ammons and Lewis. By that evening, Alfred Lion found himself in the record business—Blue Note Records was born. It was founded not as an entrepreneurial business venture, but out of a passion and a need that superseded the practical realities of life. That passion never died—that passion defined Blue Note.

Alfred pressed fifty copies each of two 78-rpm singles, one by Ammons, the other by Lewis. Out of inexperience, Lion had let the artists play too long and therefore had to issue the 78s on twelve-inch discs (usually reserved for classical recordings) rather than the conventional ten-inch size. This accidental innovation in jazz recording was the first of many elements that would make Blue Note stand out from other jazz labels. H. Royer Smith in Philadelphia bought some of these first issues, and Blue Note Records was in business.

The label's first brochure in May, 1939, carried a statement of purpose from which Lion rarely strayed for the next twenty-eight years: "Blue Note Records are designed simply to serve the uncompromising expressions of hot jazz or swing, in general. Any particular style of playing which represents an authentic way of musical feeling is genuine expression. By virtue of its significance in place, time and circumstance, it possesses its own tradition, artistic standards and audience that keeps it alive. Hot jazz, therefore, is expression and communication, a musical and social manifestation, and Blue Note Records are concerned with identifying its impulse, not its sensational and commercial adornments."

In April and June, Alfred recorded two all-star affairs with Ammons, Lewis, trumpeter Frankie Newton, drummer Big Sid Catlett, and soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet under the banner of Port Of Harlem Jazzmen. Alfred's idea was to get a series of very real, bluesy after-hours performances, so he set the sessions to start at 4:30 A.M. after the musicians had finished their club dates. These were among the first nighttime recording sessions in jazz. The second date spawned Blue Note's first bona fide hit with Sidney Bechet's interpretation of "Summertime." Alfred remembered in 1985, "A lot of musicians had heard about these late sessions. At one of them, Billie Holiday and her entourage were on the sidewalk shouting to be let up. But I was so nervous because I didn't really know what I was doing yet that I wouldn't let her up. I probably could have recorded her that night, but I couldn't deal with anything beyond what I was trying to do."

By the end of 1939, Frank Wolff, by then an accomplished professional photographer, caught the proverbial last boat out of Germany and joined his childhood friend in New York. Starting from scratch, he found a job as a photographer's assistant. Together, he and Lion kept the idiosyncratic little label alive while maintaining their day jobs.

An innovative February, 1941 session by clarinetist Edmond Hall, with the unconventional support of Meade Lux Lewis on celeste, Charlie Christian on guitar, and Israel Crosby on bass, yielded Blue Note's second hit, an atmospheric blues entitled "Profoundly Blue."

That year Lion was drafted, and Blue Note stopped recording for two years. Wolff left his job to take a spot at Milt Gabler's Commodore Record Shop at 46 West 52nd Street in Manhattan, from which Gabler ran his

ALL THIS HISTORY IS DOCUMENTED—NOT JUST ON TAPE, BUT ALSO THROUGH THE BRILLIANT PHOTOGRAPHY OF FRANCIS WOLFF.

superb Commodore label. More than a record shop, the store was the daily meeting hall and forum for jazz cognoscente and musicians. Frank was able to run and distribute Blue Note out of the shop. The label had by then released twenty-three twelve-inch 78s and four ten-inch 78s from eleven recording sessions.

After Alfred's discharge in 1943, Blue Note would become the full-time mistress of both Lion and Wolff. They quit their day gigs and got permanent offices at 767 Lexington Avenue. They recorded masterful gems in the mainstream and swing idioms for several years, scoring modest successes with some magnificent blues and ballads by tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec.

Bebop was exploding at the time, and Lion and Wolff knew that they had to confront change. They again stopped recording for a year (September, 1946–47) while they listened to new musicians and considered where jazz was heading. Although many swing musicians were hostile to the developments in modern jazz and saw them as a threat to their careers, Ike Quebec, Blue Note's most popular swing artist, welcomed innovations and introduced Alfred and Frank to the music of Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell. Soon the label was releasing beautifully crafted modern records, including the debuts of Monk, Tadd Dameron, James Moody, and Art Blakey.

Monk especially captured Lion's imagination. Lion was so taken by the ferocious swing, and completely unorthodox melodic and harmonic inventions of this unique pianist/composer, that in October and November, 1947, he recorded fourteen sides by Monk before issuing a single record. He told me in 1985, "Monk was so fantastically original and his compositions were so strong and new that I just wanted to record everything he had. That happened to me later when I first heard Herbie Nichols and Andrew Hill too. It didn't matter. It was so fantastic that I had to record it all."

Horace Silver explained in 1980, "Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff were men of integrity and real jazz fans. Blue Note was a great label to record for. They gave a first break to a lot of great artists who are still out there doing it today. They gave me my first break. They gave a lot of musicians a chance to record when all the other companies weren't interested. And they would stick with an artist, even if he wasn't selling. Of course, if every record a guy made didn't sell at all, they couldn't stay with him forever. But if a guy was a great player who didn't sell—and there were many—and if Alfred and Frank believed in him, they would stay with him. You don't find that anymore."

Blue Note's dedication to individuality, taste, and excellence was already being recognized. But its financial condition was tenuous at best. In 1949, Columbia Records introduced the ten-inch long-playing record, which could offer up to twelve minutes of music on each side, enabling a record to contain three or four selections per side rather than one. And while 78 singles came in individual generic sleeves with all the necessary information printed on the record label, the ten-inch LP introduced the need for album covers with information and graphics. A paper sleeve no longer sufficed because a record label could not contain all the vital information about the album's contents. This development offered all sorts of marketing opportunities, but it also tremendously raised the cost of doing business.

Blue Note did not begin issuing ten-inch LPs until 1951, much later than other labels, because of the cost of artwork and remastering. When twelve-inch LPs came in in the mid-fifties, the cost of retooling its catalog yet again almost put Blue Note out of business. By this time, however, several relationships were developing that saved the label from being an admirable footnote in jazz history, and catapulted it into a pantheon without peers.

In 1953, Lion had met, through saxophonist Gil Melle, a young engineer named Rudy Van Gelder, who had turned his parents' living room into a recording studio and was developing a warm, clear, big sound that would forever redefine the way jazz was heard.

In 1954, Alfred's favorite drummer, Art Blakey, had become a bandleader and signed with Blue Note. With alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson, trumpeter Clifford Brown, and pianist Horace Silver, he made his classic "A Night At Birdland" recordings. By the end of that year, Blakey and Silver had conspired to create The Jazz Messengers, who introduced the rhythmic and melodic flavor of gospel music and an earlier, earthier form of blues into modern jazz, abating the chord-running pyrotechnics that had overtaken the music in the wake of Charlie Parker's mid-forties innovations.

The first Jazz Messengers sessions in November, 1954, and February, 1955, were under Horace Silver's name with Blakey, Hank Mobley, Kenny Dorham, and Doug Watkins, and yielded Silver's classic "Doodlin'" and "The Preacher." Blue Note was back in business. Lion had always been as engrossed with feeling as he was with artistry. The approach that Silver and Blakey developed resonated in him as it would in the jazz public.

TO THIS DAY, GENERATION AFTER GENERATION OF MUSICIANS CONSIDER THE LEGACY OF RECORDED MASTERPIECES ON BLUE NOTE TO BE THEIR FIRST AND MOST FORMATIVE UNIVERSITY.

In 1956, Blue Note was finally able to afford to enter the twelve-inch LP market. Lion and Wolff discovered a young designer by the name of Reid Miles, who was working in the art department at Esquire magazine. From 1956 to 1967, he designed an endless array of striking, distinctive covers for Blue Note which incorporated Frank Wolff's photographs with Bauhaus and contemporary graphics that brilliantly depicted the spirit of the music. Amazingly, Miles was a classical music fan and had to rely completely on Alfred Lion's description of the music to conceive his covers.

The Blue Note sound was born and its team was in place. For the next decade or so, Blue Note dominated the artistic and commercial courses that jazz would take. As Francis Wolff once wrote, "We established a style, including recordings, pressings, and covers. The details made the difference." And Blue Note always placed quality above the bottom line. Sessions not deemed up to Blue Note standards were shelved regardless of cost or financial duress.

Lion's attention to detail carried over into his record productions and enabled the births of many masterpieces. While most record companies were content to let musicians come in and play forty minutes of music, Alfred had meetings with his artists to discuss direction, pick the best sidemen, and inspire challenging compositions. He paid for rehearsals and attended them faithfully, helping to shape something special out of each session. To him, a recording was something frozen in time that should promote the music and make a strong statement. Instinctively, he knew that rehearsals were essential, enabling artists to compose beyond what was expected, and allowing the musicians to learn the most intricate music, so that in the studio they could execute it with precision and feeling and still have the creative energy to conjure a fresh improvisation.

A case in point is tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, who made one album for Blue Note in the fifties and more than a dozen for Prestige. His Blue Note date, a jazz milestone, is marked by distinctive compositions, a group sound, and thoughtful, provocative improvisations by Coltrane, trumpeter Lee Morgan, trombonist Curtis Fuller, and pianist Kenny Drew. It is a masterpiece. By contrast, his Prestige dates are slapped-together affairs, rich with creative juices but lacking the magic that only the right circumstances and hard work can produce.

Lion and Wolff sought a lasting quality in Blue Note releases, and had a keen perception of the future of jazz. They produced an unending series of masterpieces that mined the tributaries of jazz from funk to avant-garde and introduced the jazz world to such artists as Thelonious Monk, Wynton Kelly, Art Blakey, Lou Donaldson, Horace Silver, Hank Mobley, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, Grant Green, Andrew Hill, Bobby Hutcherson, and many others along the way. Classics like John Coltrane's "Blue Train," Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis's "Somethin' Else," Art Blakey's "Moanin'," Horace Silver's "Song For My Father," Lee Morgan's "The Sidewinder," Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage," Eric Dolphy's "Out To Lunch," and Lou Donaldson's "Alligator Bogaloo" are as vital and influential today as when they were released.

All this history is documented—not just on tape, but also through the brilliant photography of Francis Wolff. These sounds and images capture one of the most diverse and intensely creative periods in American music.

On the thirtieth anniversary of Blue Note, Francis Wolff wrote, "By 1939, jazz had gathered enough momentum so that an experiment like Blue Note could be tried. We could not round up more than a handful of customers for a while, but we garnered a good deal of favorable publicity through our uncommercial approach and unusual sessions like the Port Of Harlem Jazzmen and the Edmond Hall Celeste Quartet. Somehow we set a style. But I would have difficulty to define it. I remember though that people used to say, 'Alfred and Frank record only what they like.' That was true. If I may add three words, we tried to record jazz with a feeling."

The Jazz Message

1955–1960

◄
Hank Mobley
THE OPEN DOOR
New York, NY
1955

THE JAZZ MESSAGE

1955–1960

Horace Silver came to Blue Note in a most casual way. He was the pianist on Lou Donaldson's first session for the label in 1952. When Donaldson had to postpone a second scheduled session, Alfred Lion asked Silver if he'd like to lead the date instead. The ten-inch LP that resulted introduced Horace's now classic "Quicksilver." Another trio album a year later included his "Opus De Funk." He was already a composer of considerable talents with a soulful, joyous approach to the piano and Art Blakey's drums ignited Horace's pianistic fire like nothing else could. Clearly something was brewing.

Art Blakey's historic February 21, 1954 quintet recording at Birdland with Clifford Brown, Donaldson, Silver, and Curly Russell, although still heavily rooted in bebop, glimpsed alternate routes. Blakey drove a small group like a big band, adding shape and dynamics to bop tunes with his powerful, inventive style of drumming. And he never considered himself so hip that he was above a solid backbeat or a strong shuffle. In Horace Silver, he found a pianist and composer of similar breadth and ideas.

Toward the end of 1954, Alfred Lion wanted to make another album with Horace, but this time with horns. The assembled cast of Silver, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, trumpeter Kenny Dorham, bassist Doug Watkins, and Blakey went into the studio on November 13 and cut four tunes for a ten-inch LP. Among them was "Doodlin'," a clever-medium-tempo blues line with a backbeat and an easy soulful feel. It gradually became the soul jazz anthem of the fifties, covered by a variety of artists, most significantly Ray Charles.

BLUE NOTE HAD A SOUND, EVEN THOUGH THE MUSICAL STYLES OF VARIOUS RECORDS WERE CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT.

The chemistry among these men was so strong that they decided to form their own band, with a common purpose to communicate to their audience during what was becoming a sluggish lapse in the jazz scene.

The bebop revolution in jazz in the late forties, spearheaded by the achievements of Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, and many others, had emphasized improvisations built on intricate harmonies played with astonishing virtuosity at often superhuman tempos. Intense listening was required to fully appreciate the new jazz. Dancing was gone, and so was the mass audience. By the early fifties, jazz was filled with excellent, but derivative players who worked with hastily assembled bands and a familiar mix of the usual standards and bop tunes. The incandescent innovations of the prior decade were already becoming codified and stale.

Silver, Blakey, and company wanted to bring the public back to jazz. They crafted a style that incorporated the language of bebop with memorable melodies and the warm, soulful roots of blues and gospel music. They called themselves The Jazz Messengers—a name they would earn.

Art Blakey told me in 1984, "Guys then would throw together a band for one night and play standard bebop tunes, just stand there and jam. And people got tired of that. Everybody was just copying. There was no innovating going on. So we decided to put something together and make a presentation for the people. We stayed basically around New York, but made some gigs in other cities. This helped the clubs and the whole scene because other guys would form real bands and start working."

Silver, Mobley, Dorham, Watkins, and Blakey went back to Rudy Van Gelder's studio on February 6, 1955 to cut another ten-inch album under Silver's name. They cut four more Silver classics, including "The Preacher," which was an instant jazz hit. But it almost didn't get recorded. Horace told me that at one of the rehearsals Alfred and Frank took him aside and asked him to substitute a straight blues for "The Preacher," which was based on an old, end-of-dance tune. They thought it was too corny. Art chimed in, telling Horace that he should stick to his guns and do whatever he felt was right as an artist. But Horace, ever the diplomat, and a man of incredibly careful planning, explained to Alfred that he would change the tune, but the date would have to be postponed in order to give him time to write a new piece. Not wanting to unravel the whole situation, Alfred relented. And "The Preacher" proved such a success that it launched The Jazz Messengers and helped save a financially failing Blue Note Records from extinction. When I asked Alfred about the story thirty-one years later, he said, "Yah, it's true. And I still think it's corny."

Somewhere along the way, this simplified, soulful outgrowth of bebop came to be known as hard bop. And thanks to the collaboration of musicians Horace Silver and Art Blakey, producer Alfred Lion, and engineer Rudy Van Gelder, it also became known as the Blue Note sound—a term that would

evolve with the music over the next twelve years. For a time, Silver and Blakey were the first-call house rhythm section for the revived Blue Note.

THANKS TO THE TWELVE-INCH LP, WITH ALMOST TWICE THE PLAYING TIME OF ITS PREDECESSOR, LABELS SMALL AND LARGE WERE RECORDING JAZZ AT A FURIOUS PACE TO DEVELOP THEIR CATALOGS.

The Jazz Messengers, a cooperative band, was dissolved by the end of 1956. Art Blakey kept the name and developed a new band with fresh talent. Horace Silver kept the other members, and introduced The Horace Silver Quintet. For more than thirty years, both of these men would lead strong, influential groups which served as training grounds for generation after generation of young musicians who would develop into major talents.

In 1955 and 1956, the already incredible pool of jazz talent in New York expanded with migrations from all over the United States, most notably Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago. Thanks to the twelve-inch LP, with almost twice the playing time of its predecessor, labels small and large were recording jazz at a furious pace to develop their catalogs. It was not uncommon for musicians to record for three or four different labels in the span of a year. And as sidemen, everyone played on everyone else's sessions. There was no problem gathering a band of high and equal talent at any hour of the day. Even a label as discerning as Blue Note could find enough worthy projects to record almost weekly.

The rush to build sizable jazz catalogs among existing labels, and the sudden rash of start-up labels flooded the market with haphazardly conceived albums by artists who deserved better documentation. Blue Note stood as a beacon of how to do it right. Even Bob Weinstock, founder of Blue Note's closest competitor, Prestige Records, told me in 1979, "I always looked up to Alfred Lion and watched what Blue Note was doing."

Blue Note had a sound, even though the musical styles of various records were considerably different. On a Blue Note record, there were no lazy, throw-away tunes, no mediocre performances or wasted moments. Instinctively, from the beginning, Alfred Lion saw the benefits of planning meetings and rehearsals. He felt it was important to find out what each artist was thinking and trying to achieve. The availability of rehearsal time made it possible for each artist to compose and arrange fresh new works, knowing that the sidemen would have time to conquer and digest the material. Jazz at its best is a combination of challenging compositions, improvisations that come from and speak to both the heart and mind, and a rhythmic swing that can be felt, regardless of its complexity. Blue Note's methodology, which involved more time and money, got closer to that ideal far more often than any other jazz label.

Lion and Wolff were always open to new talent, and they recorded a series of superb albums with Thad Jones, Lee Morgan, Hank Mobley, Johnny Griffin, Kenny Burrell, Clifford Jordan, Paul Chambers, Curtis Fuller, Sonny Clark, and many others. Although Blue Note did not have the money to bid for established talent, they were fortunate enough to be able to record four excellent albums with Sonny Rollins. The most arresting of them was "A Night At The Village Vanguard," recorded on November 3, 1957, with the tenor saxophone giant supported only by Wilbur Ware's bass and Elvin Jones's drums. Although this was a daring setting at the time, Rollins met the challenge with his extraordinary resources as one of the purest and most consistently inventive improvisers in music.

Miles Davis, who had recorded for Blue Note in the early fifties, was instrumental in organizing a session for Blue Note by alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley, then a sideman with Davis, and a Mercury recording artist. Davis, though a star by that time and signed to Columbia, was the featured sideman on the Adderley album. The result was "Somethin' Else," which remains a best-seller, a studied masterwork, and one of the finest albums in either man's prolific discography.

John Coltrane was a controversial and unyielding exploratory voice on the tenor saxophone when he joined Miles Davis in 1955. He eventually signed with Prestige Records, but was able to honor a prior commitment to make an album for Blue Note. His "Blue Train," with Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Kenny Drew, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones is one of those magical events. The tunes, the tempos, the solos . . . everything had a rarified air about it. This was perfectly conceived and perfectly executed magic, and it is still one of the best-selling and most studied recordings in jazz history. One of Alfred Lion's greatest regrets was not being able to sign Coltrane.

Bud Powell, with a healthy knowledge of Bach and an astonishingly innovative mind, was the piano pioneer of bebop. Troubled by mental problems from an early age, his playing in the fifties became as erratic as his behavior. He recorded albums of varying quality on various labels. But nothing in this period approached the brilliance of his Blue Note sessions, including "Time Waits" and "The Scene Changes." The reason for these successes may be the respect and care Blue Note gave him.

BUD POWELL, WITH A HEALTHY KNOWLEDGE OF BACH AND AN ASTONISHINGLY INNOVATIVE MIND, WAS THE PIANO PIONEER OF BEBOP.

Alfred Lion once explained, "In the early fifties, Birdland made a deal with (Bud). He was supposed to play there several times a week or whatever. So they put him in an apartment and he was supplied with everything he needed. They wanted to make sure he would appear, so they took complete charge of his life. The apartment was around 48th Street on the East Side. I hate to say it, but I think he was always locked in up there. He was a little bit under house arrest, you know? . . . Sometimes, when he was kept in that apartment, I'd call Bud and invite him to a movie and then let the Birdland people know. So we'd go to 42nd Street, maybe have a hamburger and a drink. Then we'd go to see a Western. Strangely enough, he loved Western movies. He was intrigued with the old railroads, the horses, the rolling hills, everything."

The funkier side of hard bop reached its pinnacle when Art Blakey returned to Blue Note in 1958 to record an album with a brand new band consisting of tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Bobby Timmons, and bassist Jymie Merritt. The title track was Timmons's "Moanin'," a low down, gospel-like theme with a march-shuffle bridge. Lee Morgan's brilliant solo, improvised on the spot, is a magnificent composition in and of itself. It reached people who had never heard the word jazz.

Art Blakey, along with Horace Silver—whose superb succession of Blue Note albums spawned "Señor Blues," "Sister Sadie," and many others during his twenty-eight years with the label—were living up to their original promise to communicate and reach an audience. What they, and the rest of the Blue Note family were creating in the course of simply doing what they did would become timeless masterpieces with the superior distinction of the Blue Note sound.

Lou Donaldson
THE TIME IS RIGHT
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1959

◄
Horace Silver
J. R. MONTEROSE
Hackensack, NJ
1956

►
Milt Jackson
HANK MOBLEY
AND HIS ALL STARS
Hackensack, NJ
1957

Max Roach
HERBIE NICHOLS TRIO
Hackensack, NJ
1955

Clifford Brown
New York, NY
1953

Hank Mobley
ROLL CALL
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

Hank Mobley
Pepper Adams
POPPIN'
Hank Mobley
Hackensack, NJ
1957

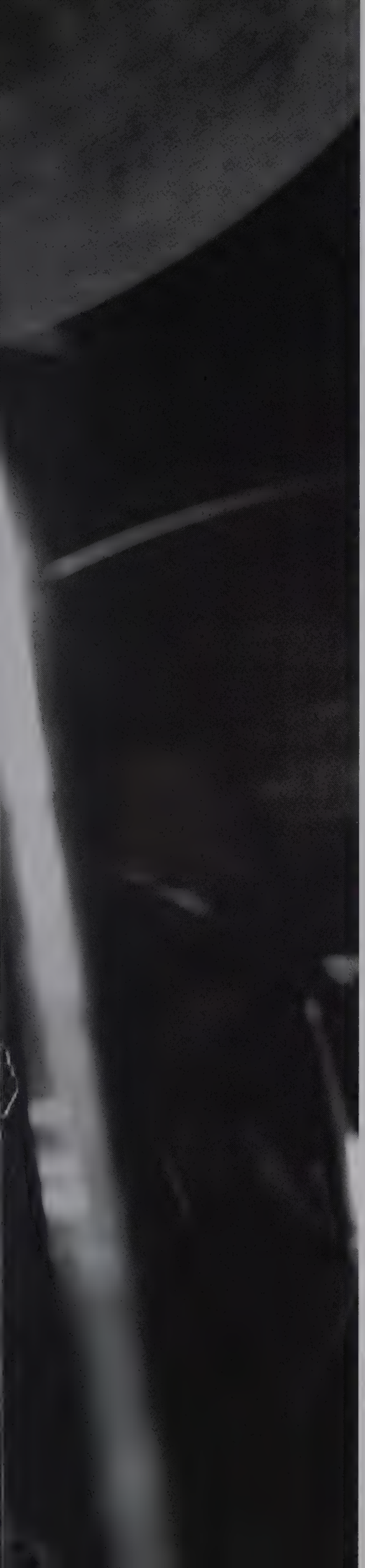
Hank Mobley
THE STYLINGS OF SILVER
Horace Silver
Hackensack, NJ
1957

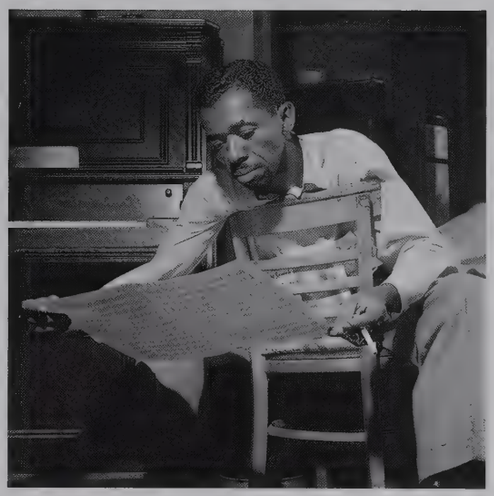
Hank Mobley
HANK MOBLEY QUARTET
Hackensack, NJ
1955

Lee Morgan
BLUE TRAIN
John Coltrane
Hackensack, NJ
1957

Wilbur Ware
J. R. MONTEROSE
Hackensack, NJ
1956

Clifford Jordan
John Gilmore
BLOWING IN
FROM CHICAGO
Hackensack, NJ
1957



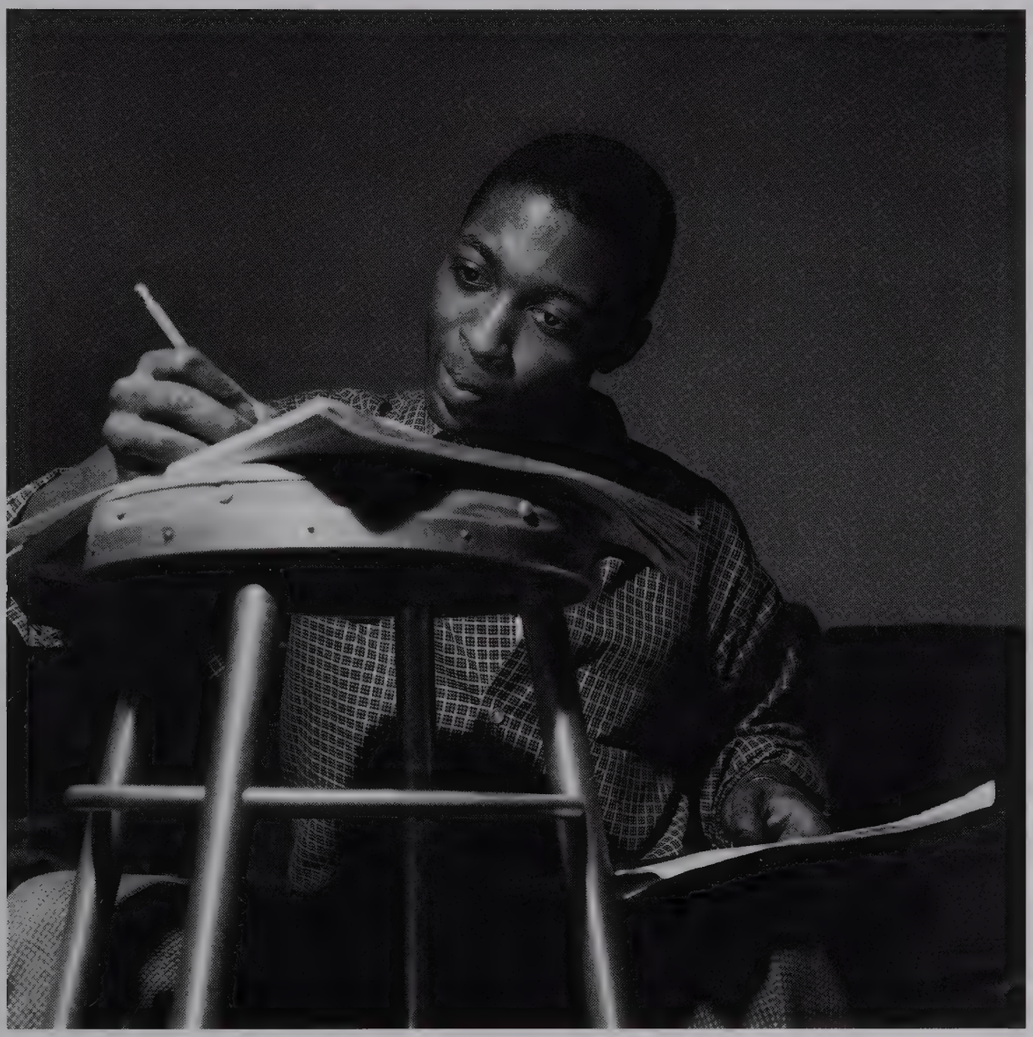


▲
Philly Joe Jones
New York, NY
1957

Art Taylor
BONE & BARI
Curtis Fuller
Hackensack, NJ
1957

◄
Art Blakey
THE CORK AND BIB
Westbury, NY
1958

Kenny Burrell
K. B. BLUES
Hackensack, NJ
1957



Curtis Fuller
TWO BONES
Hackensack, NJ
1958

▲
Bennie Green
Babs Gonzales
MINOR REVELATION
Bennie Green
Hackensack, NJ
1958

►
Bennie Green
WALKIN' AND TALKIN'
Hackensack, NJ
1959

Jackie McLean
COOL STRUTTIN'
Sonny Clark
Hackensack, NJ
1958

Thad Jones
THE MAGNIFICENT THAD JONES
Hackensack, NJ
1957

▲
Curtis Fuller
THE OPENER
Hackensack, NJ
1957

◄
Sonny Rollins
Gene Ramey
Donald Byrd
SONNY ROLLINS,
VOLUME ONE
Hackensack, NJ
1956

Bobby Timmons
HANK
Hank Mobley
Hackensack, NJ
1957

Donald Byrd
Gene Ramey
SONNY ROLLINS,
VOLUME ONE
Hackensack, NJ
1956

▲
Curtis Fuller
John Coltrane

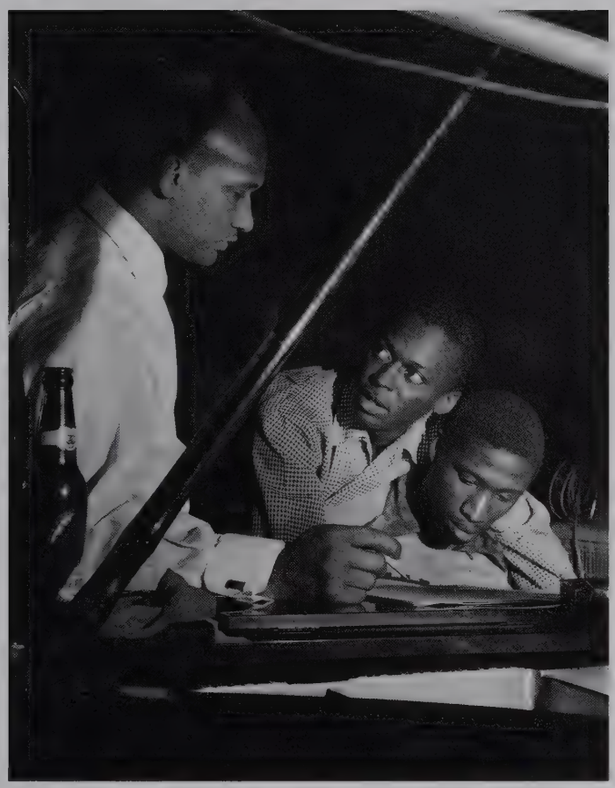
◄
John Coltrane
Lee Morgan
BLUE TRAIN
John Coltrane
Hackensack, NJ
1957

John Coltrane
BLUE TRAIN
Hackensack, NJ
1957

Curtis Fuller
Lee Morgan
John Coltrane
BLUE TRAIN
John Coltrane
Hackensack, NJ
1957

John Coltrane
Johnny Griffin
Hank Mobley
A BLOWING SESSION
Johnny Griffin
Hackensack, NJ
1957

J. J. Johnson
Clifford Brown
New York, NY
1953



▲
Oscar Pettiford
Miles Davis
Gil Coggins

◄
Miles Davis
MILES DAVIS
VOLUMES ONE AND TWO
New York, NY
1952

Paul Chambers
SONNY ROLLINS, VOLUME TWO
Hackensack, NJ
1957

Donaldson and Stanley Turrentine used the organ-guitar-drums instrumentation on their funkier records. Many in the jazz press reacted to organ-driven soul jazz as reactionary or non-innovative. But Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff did not see this music as any less deserving than the cutting edge music that they were making with Jackie McLean or Andrew Hill. After all, what they were always after was jazz with feeling, and this was certainly that.

In the sixties, major labels were getting more heavily into the jazz market. Blue Note lost Jimmy Smith to MGM-Verve, which developed a brassy orchestra sound around him that reached a far greater audience. Twice, Blue Note tried its hand at bigger productions. One was Donald Byrd's "A New Perspective" with a septet and a full gospel choir arranged by Duke Pearson. The other was Stanley Turrentine's "Joyride" with the Oliver Nelson big band. While both were artistically and commercially successful, the financial burden of making more records on this scale would have proved too much for the small label.

In March, 1967, Lou Donaldson recorded "Alligator Bogaloo" with organist Lonnie Smith, guitarist George Benson, and drummer Idris Muhammad. This was the first jazz record to successfully blend the contemporary R&B rhythms into a jazz framework. The album crossed over well beyond the jazz audience and created a whole new movement in funky groove-oriented jazz.

Alfred Lion retired that August, but Frank Wolff and Duke Pearson, a Blue Note producer as well as pianist and composer, took the reigns and made a successful run of albums in this genre with Donaldson, Lonnie Smith, Grant Green, organist Reuben Wilson, and others.

Ironically, the soul jazz recordings from the organ and boogaloo eras were always viewed as having little lasting importance or viability. Then in the mid-eighties, a handful of club DJs in London started playing old Blue Note sides on dance floors filled with twenty-year-olds. The craze grew and spread to Tokyo and New York. Major rap artists like NWA, De La Soul, Public Enemy, and A Tribe Called Quest started sampling pieces of Blue Note tracks in their records. Suddenly, this neglected part of the Blue Note catalog is revered and sought after by a new generation that had not previously known that jazz existed.

John Patton
ALONG CAME JOHN
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Quentin Warren
ROCKIN' THE BOAT
Jimmy Smith
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Lou Donaldson
SUNNY SIDE UP
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

Freddie Roach
GOOD MOVE
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Andy Simpkins
Bill Dowdy
Gene Harris
Stanley Turrentine
BLUE HOUR
Stanley Turrentine and
The Three Sounds
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

◄
Jimmy Smith
PLAYS FATS WALLER
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1962

►
Jimmy Smith
AT THE ORGAN.
VOLUME TWO
Hackensack, NJ
1956

Donald Byrd
Herbie Hancock
I'M TRYIN' TO GET HOME
Donald Byrd
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

▲
Eddie McFadden
THE SOUNDS OF JIMMY SMITH
New York, NY
1957

◄
Harold Vick
ALONG CAME JOHN
John Patton
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

►
Ike Quebec
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

▲
Ike Quebec
Milt Hinton

Ike Quebec
HEAVY SOUL
Ike Quebec
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

▲
Donald Bailey
TWO SOULS IN ONE
George Braith
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

◄
Shirley Scott
NEVER LET ME GO
Stanley Turrentine
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Stanley Turrentine
ROUGH 'N TUMBLE
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Melvin Lastie
ALLIGATOR BOGALOO
Lou Donaldson
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1967

Jack McDuff
GRANTSTAND
Grant Green
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

Grant Green
John Patton
OH BABY!
John Patton
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Fred Jackson
HOOTIN' 'N TOOTIN'
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1962

Grant Green
Herbie Hancock
Alfred Lion
FEELIN' THE SPIRIT
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1962

Grant Green
GREEN STREET
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

▲
Grant Green
George Braith
EXTENSION
George Braith
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

◀
Kenny Burrell
JOHN JENKINS WITH
KENNY BURRELL
Hackensack, NJ
1957

Idris Muhammad
ALLIGATOR BOGALOO
Lou Donaldson
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1967

Hard Bop and Beyond

1963–1967

◀
Jackie McLean
HIGH FREQUENCY
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

HARD BOP AND BEYOND

1963–1967

The early sixties were a fertile time in jazz, not only because there was such an extensive pool of exceptional talent, but also because artists were taking the music in so many directions. Blue Note, in its eclectic open-mindedness, was the benchmark for much of this activity.

THE CONFLUENCE OF QUALITY AND NEW IDEAS, THE SHEER AMOUNT OF BRILLIANT MUSIC PRODUCED IN ANY GIVEN YEAR, AND THE HIGH LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE FOR PURE ARTISTRY MAKE THE FIRST HALF OF THE SIXTIES A TIME TO CHERISH AND ENVY.

In 1959, the underrated tenor saxophone master Ike Quebec returned to Blue Note as a recording artist and, perhaps more importantly, as a talent scout and musical director for the label. It was he who brought the father of the modern tenor, Dexter Gordon, to the label in 1961, effectively launching a comeback for Gordon after a decade of relative obscurity.

Nineteen fifty-nine was also the year John Coltrane and alto saxophonist Jackie McLean completed their contracts with Prestige. The bidding for Coltrane proved too rich for any of the independent jazz labels—he ended up at Atlantic. But Blue Note was able to sign McLean, who began to record beautifully executed music that realized his talent. From hard bop classics like "Jackie's Bag" and "Bluesnik" to the more experimental "Let Freedom Ring," Jackie's rapidly maturing artistry found the right environment at Blue Note.

Alfred and Frank learned early on that the best source of talent was the recommendation of other musicians. McLean brought Bobby Hutcherson and Tony Williams into the fold. Donald Byrd introduced Blue Note to Duke Pearson and Herbie Hancock. Kenny Dorham tipped them to Joe Henderson—and on and on.

Blue Note wisely encouraged the repertory company approach among its artists. Like-minded artists would play on each other's record dates, and young musicians would develop as sidemen on various sessions before becoming leaders. This kind of cross-fertilization was not only good for the music, but it also helped expose new artists to the jazz public.

The jazz message set forth by Art Blakey and Horace Silver in the mid-fifties brought the audience back into the jazz experience. But there were other forces afoot, questioning the dictates on improvising within chord changes, adhering to a strict and steady meter, and the basic format of theme-solos-theme. George Russell, Cecil Taylor, and Ornette Coleman, whose personal solutions to these questions were very different, were making music that came from the jazz tradition, but broke with many of its tenets. While musicians, critics, and fans endlessly debated these artists' new directions, one message was remarkably clear: anything is possible —nothing has to stay the same.

Blue Note was finding and signing an impressive second generation of hard bop musicians such as Herbie Hancock, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, vibist Bobby Hutcherson, and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, who were constantly pushing the musical envelope. Alfred and Frank developed friendships with their artists and personally encouraged their development. Hutcherson said, "Alfred and Frank were more like jazz musicians than record executives. They loved to hang out and have a great time. They loved the music and had a real feel for it."

Albums like Art Blakey's "Mosaic," Herbie Hancock's "Empyrean Isles" and "Maiden Voyage," Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil," Freddie Hubbard's "Hub Tones," Bobby Hutcherson's "Components," and Joe Henderson's "Mode For Joe" were among the near-perfect classics that were Blue Note's standard fare in those days. Because they were so well thought out and arranged, these small-group gems were able to sustain the interest of the casual listener as well as the serious student of the music. The musicians mastered the material before they reached the studio, allowing them to concentrate on feeling and fresh improvisations once the tapes were rolling. But Blue Note's biggest commercial successes in this era, "The Sidewinder" and "Song For My Father," were happy accidents.

Returning to the label in 1963 after a three-year absence, Lee Morgan included an unusual twenty-four-bar blues with a syncopated backbeat pattern and a funky turnaround on his first session. "The Sidewinder" clocked in at over ten minutes. Alfred loved the feel of this track, but neither he nor Morgan had any idea that it would cause such a sensation, climbing the pop charts and finding its way onto television as the music for an automobile campaign.

This success had its consequences. Blue Note's distributors around the country were screaming for more of the same. Two brilliant Morgan sessions (later issued as "Search For The New Land" and "Tom Cat"), recorded after "The Sidewinder" but before its release, were shelved for lack of a funky follow-up to this surprise hit. Suddenly, Blue Note was in another league, barely able to keep up with its record pressing plant bills while it waited for the money from "The Sidewinder's" sales.

ALFRED AND FRANK LEARNED EARLY ON THAT THE BEST SOURCE OF TALENT WAS THE RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER MUSICIANS.

Pianist Andrew Hill wrote "The Rumproller" for Morgan as a sequel. Blue Note was now faced with filling a demand that it had inadvertently created for soulful funk in a hard bop setting. But neither Blue Note nor its artists were about to sacrifice their standards for an assembly-line money machine. A series of albums by Lee Morgan, Hank Mobley, Donald Byrd, Blue Mitchell, Stanley Turrentine, and others featured the obligatory funky lead-off track. But in each case, these were not cynical knock-offs, and the rest of these albums had the depth and variety that was the Blue Note hallmark.

In 1964, Horace Silver wrote "Song For My Father" in commemoration of his Cape Verdean father's African and Portugese roots. "As a kid, my father had always tried to get me interested in his music, but all I wanted to hear was jazz. Then I went down to Brazil to visit Sergio Mendes. I was so impressed by the music I heard there which had Portugese and African origins that I wrote this song for my father. I really began to appreciate what he was talking about." Bam! Another uncompromising Blue Note album sails onto the pop charts.

The confluence of quality and new ideas, the sheer amount of brilliant music produced in any given year, and the high level of acceptance for pure artistry made the first half of the sixties a time to cherish and envy. Musicians of this generation were not only expressive artists of rare talent, but also schooled virtuosos. They had inquisitive minds and could execute whatever they imagined—playing an earthy blues with feeling and moving effortlessly into a piece in 7/4 time with complex harmonies and intricate interplay. Their creative skills seemed unending and their feeling so natural.

Anything was, indeed, possible. And these artists had the mettle to prove it. What was business as usual at Blue Note appears now as a pantheon of major musical achievements.

▲
Joe Chambers
COMPONENTS
Bobby Hutcherson
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

◄
Dexter Gordon
GO
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1962

Dexter Gordon
DOIN' ALLRIGHT
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

▲
Tony Williams
The Village Vanguard
New York, NY
1965

◄
Freddie Hubbard
THE TURNAROUND
Hank Mobley
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Bob Cranshaw
DELIGHTFULEE
Lee Morgan
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Jymie Merritt
A NIGHT IN TUNISIA
Art Blakey
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

Bennie Green
Stanley Turrentine
EASY LIVING
Ike Quebec
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1962

Sonny Greenwich
THIRD SEASON
Hank Mobley
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1967

Larry Ridley
DESTINATION OUT
Jackie McLean
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Bobby Hutcherson
Lee Morgan
MODE FOR JOE
Joe Henderson
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

George Coleman
MAIDEN VOYAGE
Herbie Hancock
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

McCoy Tyner
A SLICE OF THE TOP
Hank Mobley
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Blue Mitchell
Chick Corea
THE THING TO DO
Blue Mitchell
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

Ike Quebec
Philly Joe Jones
BLUE AND SENTIMENTAL
Ike Quebec
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

Kiane Zawadi
Freddie Hubbard
READY FOR FREDDIE
Freddie Hubbard
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

Art Blakey
A NIGHT IN TUNISIA
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

Sam Jones
GOODEN'S CORNER
Grant Green
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

Jimmy Heath
HUB CAP
Freddie Hubbard
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

Charles Tolliver
JACKNIFE
Jackie McLean
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Elvin Jones
New York, NY
1961

▲
Reggie Workman
JUJU
Wayne Shorter
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

►
Joe Henderson
New York, NY
1963

Tina Brooks
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

Tina Brooks
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

▲
Leo Parker
ROLLIN' WITH LEO
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961

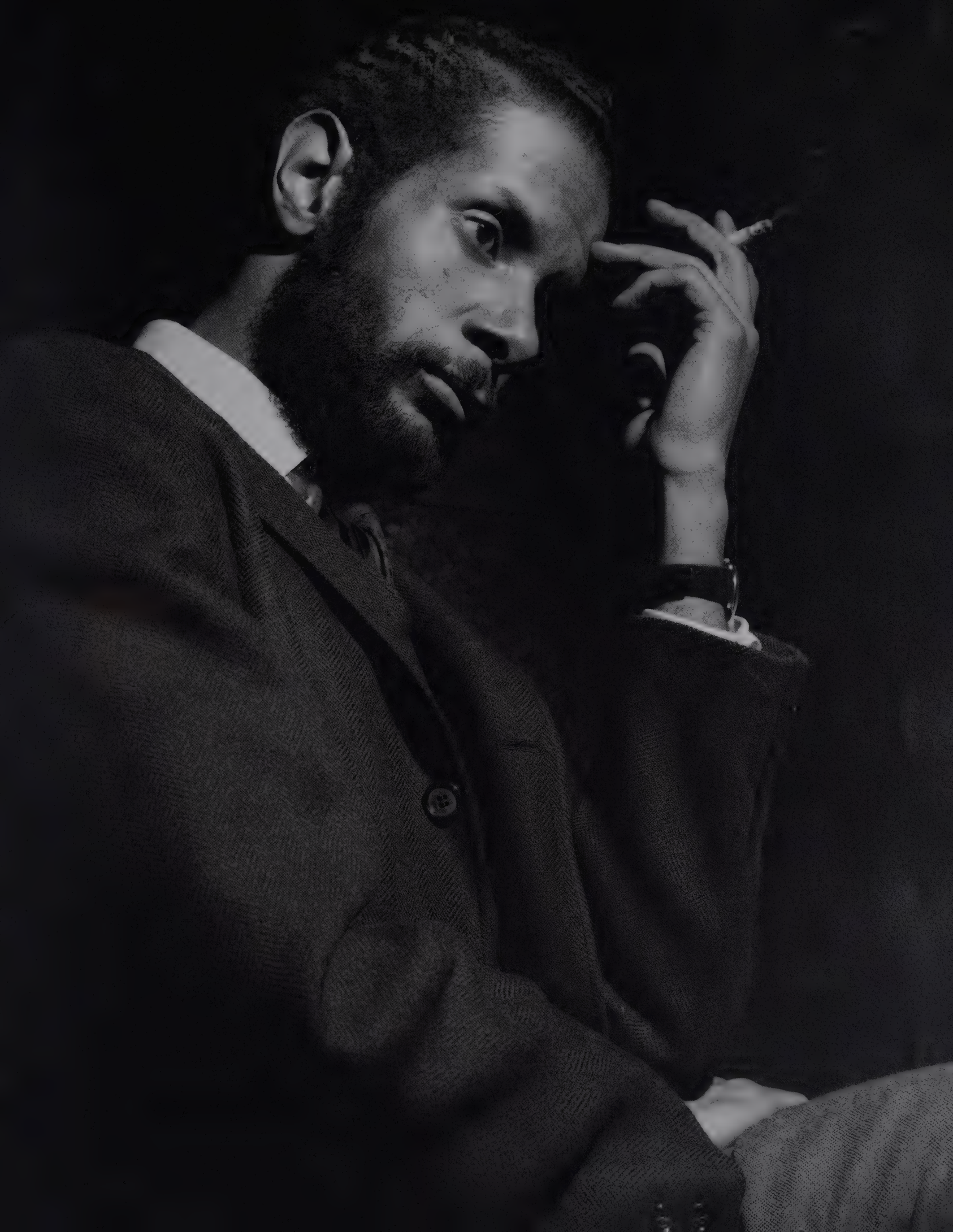
►
Bobby Timmons
A NIGHT IN TUNISIA
Art Blakey
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1960

Wayne Shorter
SEARCH FOR THE NEW LAND
Lee Morgan
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

Hank Mobley
Harold Mabern
DIPPIN'
Hank Mobley
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

▲
Steve Swallow
BASRA
Pete La Roca
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

►
Jackie McLean
A FICKLE SONANCE
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1961



◄◄

Charlie Rouse
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Duke Pearson
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Tyrone Washington
THE JODY GRIND
Horace Silver
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Kenny Dorham
Joe Henderson
UNA MAS
Kenny Dorham
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

The Avant-Garde

1963–1967

◀
Don Cherry
WHERE IS BROOKLYN?
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

THE AVANT-GARDE

1963–1967

However placid the fifties may have appeared on the surface, those years planted the seeds of the innovations and social upheavals that would polarize society and the arts in the often excessive sixties. Jazz was no exception. Cecil Taylor's quartet with Steve Lacy, George Russell's sextet, and Ornette Coleman's quartet with Don Cherry were already recording music, each group with a very different vision of the future. Miles Davis was experimenting with open-ended modes in place of chord changes. And John Coltrane was working on "sheets of sound" of incredible harmonic density.

The complete freedom from having to improvise within the set chord changes was one of the salient features of Ornette Coleman's music. He was alternately reviled and lauded by various factions of the music world. His gift for melody and intuitive playing made a convincing argument for such freedom. To make an improvisation work with no structure or point of reference to fall back on is a most demanding kind of freedom. But the freedom banner also made it possible for inept musicians to get away with playing absolutely nothing very loudly. In an atmosphere of protest and freedom, there were those who learned how to operate a saxophone just well enough to play a simple motif and then scream their way through a solo.

Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff were typically cautious about all of this. Jackie McLean was the first Blue Note artist to experiment with free developments in 1962 on his album "Let Freedom Ring." In 1963, he found musicians skilled and unique enough to make a firm commitment to this direction with "One Step Beyond." His quintet included Tony Williams, a seventeen-year-old drummer with a fully matured and completely original rhythmic conception, whom McLean had found in Boston and urged to move to New York; vibist Bobby Hutcherson, whose grasp of all forms of music is astonishing; and trombonist Grachan Moncur, whose beautifully crafted compositions were strong enough to serve as platforms to free improvisation.

Alfred was also introduced that year to pianist Andrew Hill, a unique, gifted, and prolific composer. His music was free to the extent that it did not follow the traditional jazz structures. But framed by his compositions and steered by his playing, Hill's music had its own demanding inner logic. Few could play it and do it justice. Fortunately, Alfred was able to surround Hill with just those people. Alfred's commitment was so strong that Blue Note made Andrew's first four albums ("Black Fire," "Smokestack," "Judgment," and "Point Of Departure") in a five-month period before even one of them was released.

BLUE NOTE WAS AT THE HEIGHT OF ITS SUCCESS BY 1966. STILL, EVERY DOLLAR HAD TO BE PLOWED BACK INTO THE BUSINESS TO FULFILL THE DEMAND FOR ITS PRODUCT.

Tony Williams, who joined Miles Davis soon after Davis's first record dates on Blue Note, became a Blue Note leader in 1964. For his album "Life Time," Williams brought saxophonist Sam Rivers down from Boston. Rivers had been a professional violist and reedman since the late forties. He'd even played on an unissued Blue Note session by Tadd Dameron in 1961. By 1964, he had a unique style, indebted neither to the Sonny Rollins nor the John Coltrane school of thought. Blue Note signed Rivers immediately.

That same year, guitarist Grant Green stretched the traditional, bluesy boundaries of the organ-guitar-drums trio in "Talkin' 'Bout" with the innovative drummer Elvin Jones and a young organist from Newark by the name of Larry Young. Young, later accurately dubbed the Coltrane of the organ, was taking the instrument into a new era with all the artistry and excitement that Jimmy Smith had eight years earlier. Two months after the "Talkin' 'Bout" session, Young was recording his first Blue Note album with Rivers, Green, and Jones. His next album, "Unity," has become a classic. With Joe Henderson, Woody Shaw, and Elvin Jones, he fashioned a program of astonishing performances that clearly carved out a place for the organ in the cutting edge of jazz.

Blue Note showed uncanny taste in finding and recording the most technically skilled and original artists in experimental jazz. Once Alfred and Frank had a few impressive discoveries under their belt and a handle on what they were doing, they sought out some of the established pioneers of the movement.

Eric Dolphy, a classically-trained saxophonist and flutist, who had been working professionally in his native Los Angeles since the late forties, was a brilliant and original thinker. He came to prominence in New York working with Charles Mingus and John Coltrane, and through a series of excellent

albums on Prestige. But no one knew just how brilliant and original he was until he recorded his one Blue Note album, "Out To Lunch," on February 25, 1964, with Freddie Hubbard, Bobby Hutcherson, Richard Davis, and Tony Williams. This extraordinary group was able to execute Dolphy's impossibly complex compositions with precision and feeling. "Out To Lunch" was the first fully realized performance of Dolphy's music. Tragically, it would be the only one. Five months later on a European tour, Dolphy died of complications resulting from diabetes.

Ornette Coleman was always a unique and eccentric saxophonist who heard music in a dramatically different way. After a decade of financial struggles and hostility from other musicians in his native Texas and in Los Angeles, he found trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummers Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins—musicians sympathetic to his harmonically radical, but viscerally soulful music. Between 1959 and 1962 he made a series of innovative, controversial recordings on Atlantic, bringing him simultaneous adulation and intense, almost sensorious vilification from opposing critical camps. Hurt and exhausted by this emotional roller coaster and angered by the lack of remuneration for his accomplishments, Ornette Coleman unpredictably and abruptly retired.

THANKFULLY, JAZZ HAS LONG SINCE RECOVERED FROM ITS ECONOMIC AND ARTISTIC MALAISE. BUT THE BODY OF WORK DOCUMENTED BY BLUE NOTE BETWEEN 1955 AND 1967 REMAINS UNSURPASSED.

Driven by his own creative urge, Coleman came back in 1965 with a new sound, a new group (bassist David Izenzon and drummer Charles Moffett), and a new recording affiliation—Blue Note. His first release was two stark and stunning volumes recorded live at the Golden Circle in Stockholm.

Don Cherry's clipped, concise trumpet served as an empathetic alter ego to Ornette's rich, expressive alto saxophone. When Coleman retired, Cherry had little to show for the years of their highly publicized collaboration (his one album as a leader, made for Atlantic in 1961, would not be issued until 1966, and even then he had to share billing with sideman John Coltrane). The same year Ornette returned, Cherry began a series of three excellent albums for Blue Note with "Complete Communion."

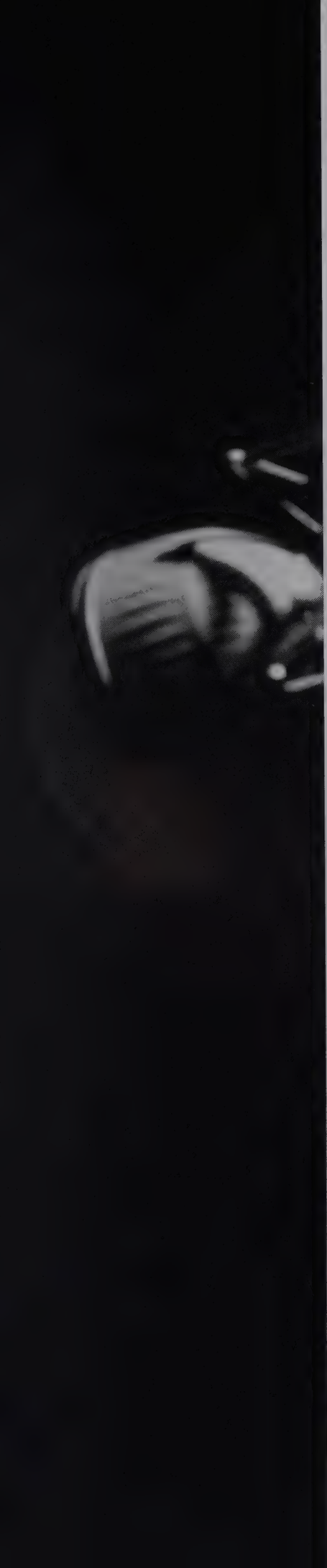
A conservatory-trained piano virtuoso, Cecil Taylor had a unique way of hearing and organizing music from the start. When he first recorded in 1956, his odd blend of classical and jazz elements fueled his excessively vocal champions and detractors. Despite great press and ever-constant creative growth, Cecil Taylor had not recorded in the United States for five years when Blue Note signed him in 1966 and recorded "Unit Structures" and "Conquistador," two of the most stunning ensemble recordings in his discography.

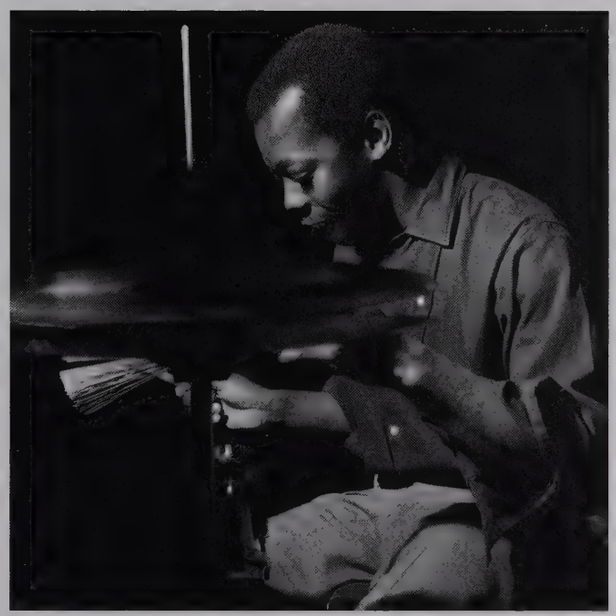
Operating an independent record label is a stressful and financially unrewarding way of life. Thanks to Lee Morgan, Horace Silver, Lou Donaldson, and others, Blue Note was at the height of its success by 1966. Still, every dollar earned had to be plowed back into the business to fill the demand for its product. That year, Lion and Wolff sold the company to Liberty Records. They were still brimming with ideas and enthusiasm, but they needed the financial resources that a pop label with a cash reserve could supply.

Although Alfred still had the creative freedom to record cutting-edge artists like Taylor and Coleman, he did not adjust smoothly to the demands of corporate structure after running his own show for twenty-eight years. This dissatisfaction, compounded by stress and heart-related health problems, led to his retirement in August, 1967. Frank Wolff took over until his own death in 1971.

By the end of the decade, new, sophisticated forms of R&B and rock were beginning to deeply erode jazz's audience. The quality and quantity of recorded work fell sharply in the early seventies. Such prime Blue Note recordings as McCoy Tyner's "The Real McCoy" and Ornette Coleman's "New York Is Now" marked the end of jazz's formative, most innovative era.

Thankfully, jazz has long since recovered from its economic and artistic malaise. But the body of work documented by Blue Note between 1955 and 1967 remains unsurpassed, preserving the vision and talent of hundreds of artists and musicians, and the integrity of the founders of the Blue Note sound.





▲
Andrew Cyrille
CONQUISTADOR
Cecil Taylor
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

◄
Sam Rivers
A NEW CONCEPTION
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Ornette Coleman
THE EMPTY FOXHOLE
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Andrew Hill
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1967

◄
Denardo Coleman
Ornette Coleman
Ornette and Denardo Coleman

►
Denardo Coleman
THE EMPTY FOXHOLE
Ornette Coleman
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Grachan Moncur III
EVOLUTION
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Ron Carter
CONTOURS
Sam Rivers
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

▲
Eric Dolphy
Kenny Dorham
POINT OF DEPARTURE
Andrew Hill
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

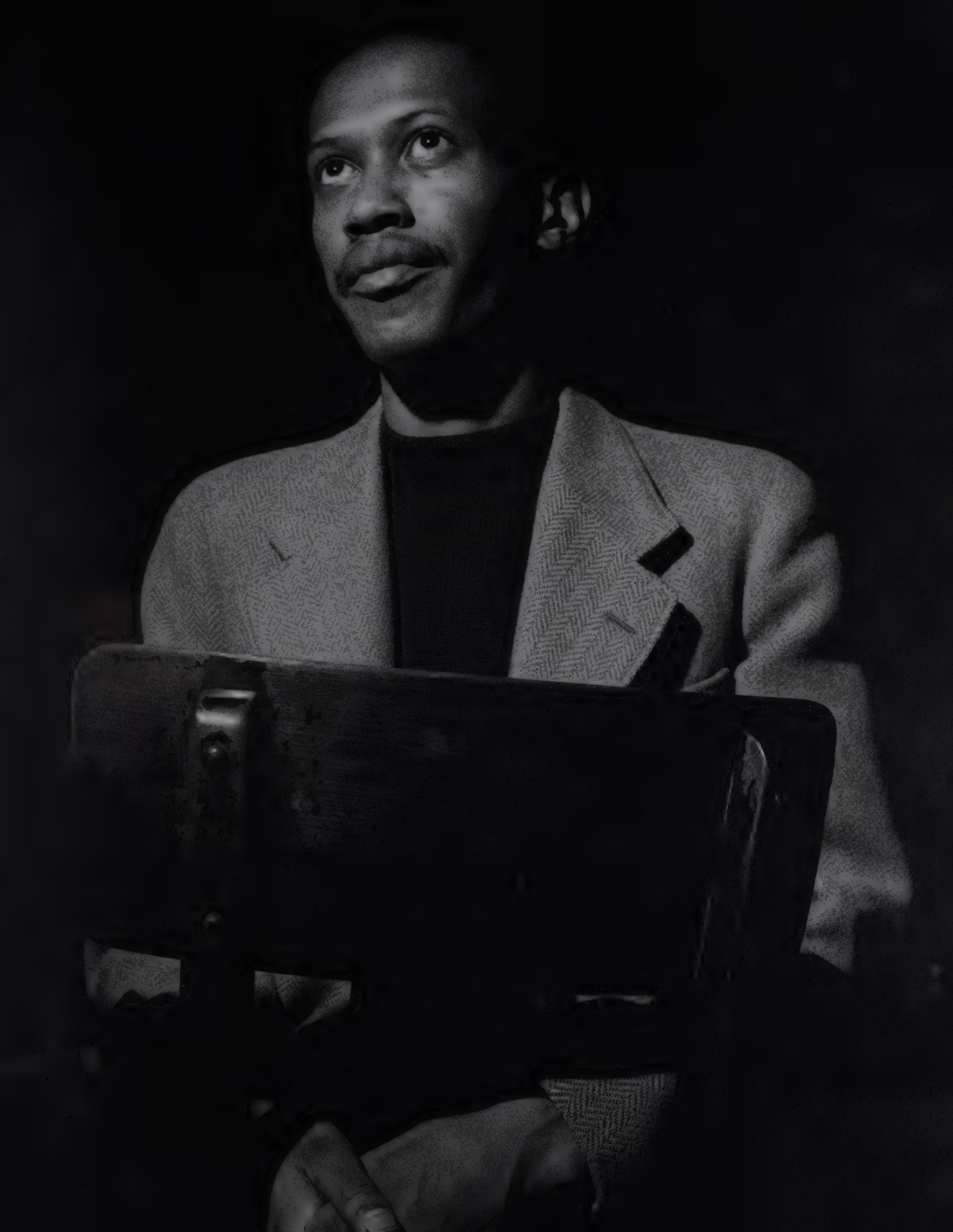
◄
Eric Dolphy
OUT TO LUNCH
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

▲
Grachan Moncur III
Jackie McLean
Duke Pearson
EVOLUTION
Grachan Moncur III
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

►
Grachan Moncur III
HIPNOSIS
Jackie McLean
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1967

▲
Tony Williams
OUT TO LUNCH
Eric Dolphy
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

►
Don Cherry
The Village Vanguard
New York, NY
1965



Richard Davis
SMOKESTACK
Andrew Hill
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

Tony Williams
OUT TO LUNCH
Eric Dolphy
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

▲
Bob Cranshaw
EVOLUTION
Grachan Moncur III
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

►
Freddie Hubbard
COMPULSION
Andrew Hill
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Don Cherry
COMPLETE COMMUNION
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

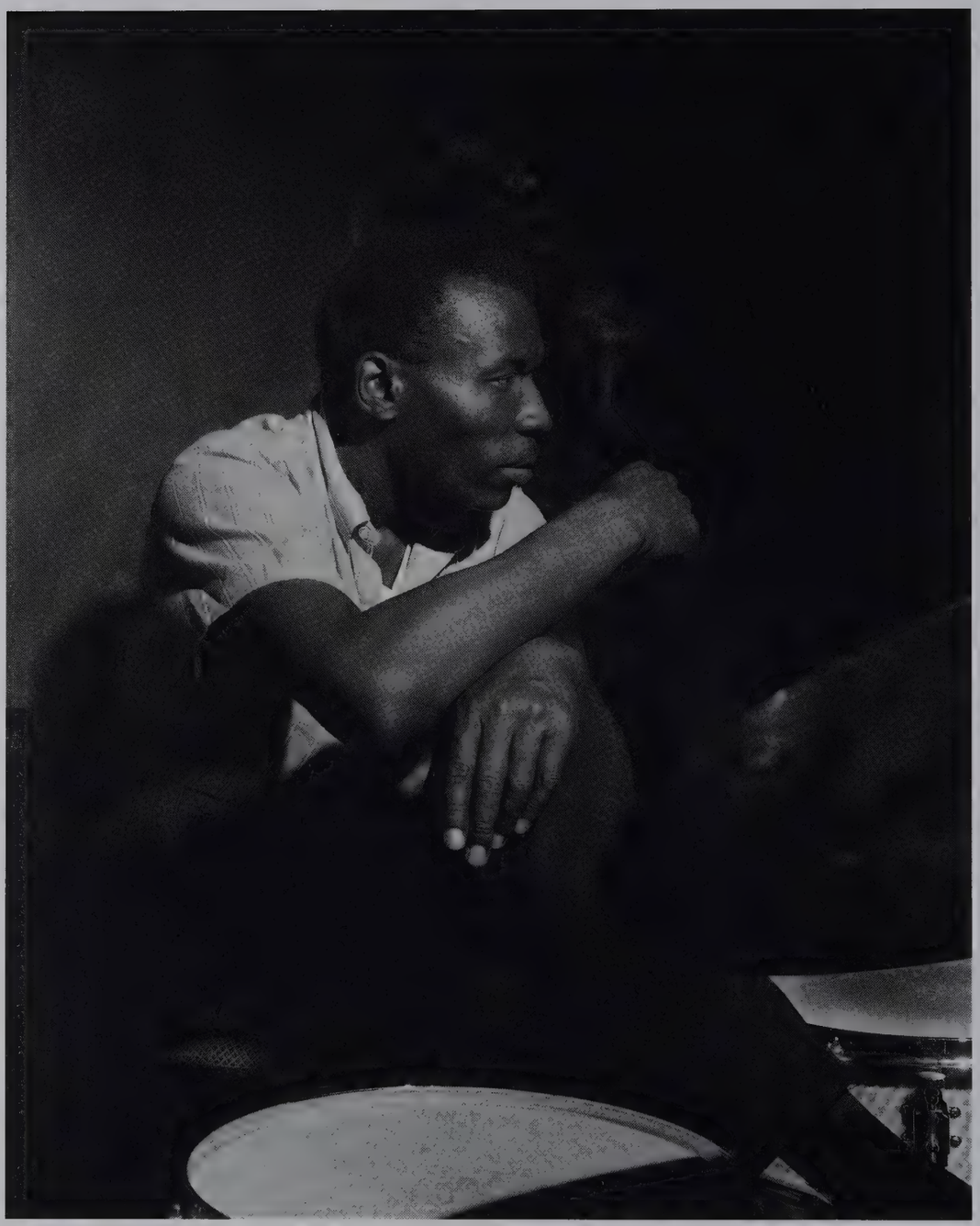
Gato Barbieri
COMPLETE COMMUNION
Don Cherry
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Joe Chambers
CONTOURS
Sam Rivers
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Bobby Hutcherson
EVOLUTION
Grachan Moncur III
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1963

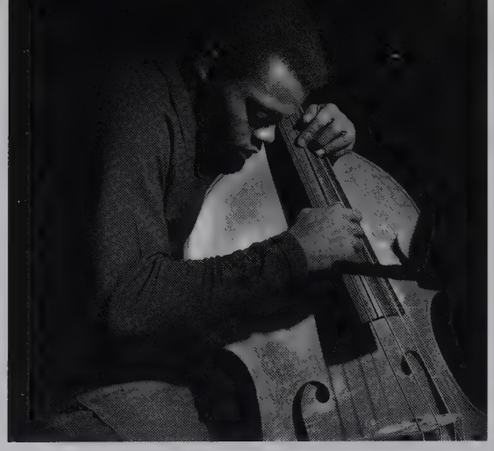
▲
Andrew Hill
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1967

◄
Don Cherry
Henry Grimes
COMPLETE COMMUNION
Don Cherry
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965



Elvin Jones
TALKIN' ABOUT
Grant Green
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

Gary Peacock
LIFE TIME
Tony Williams
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964



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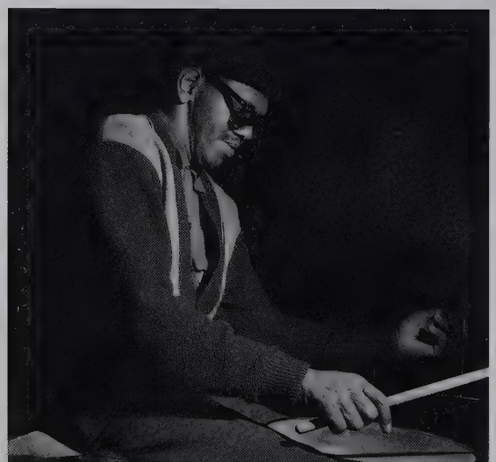
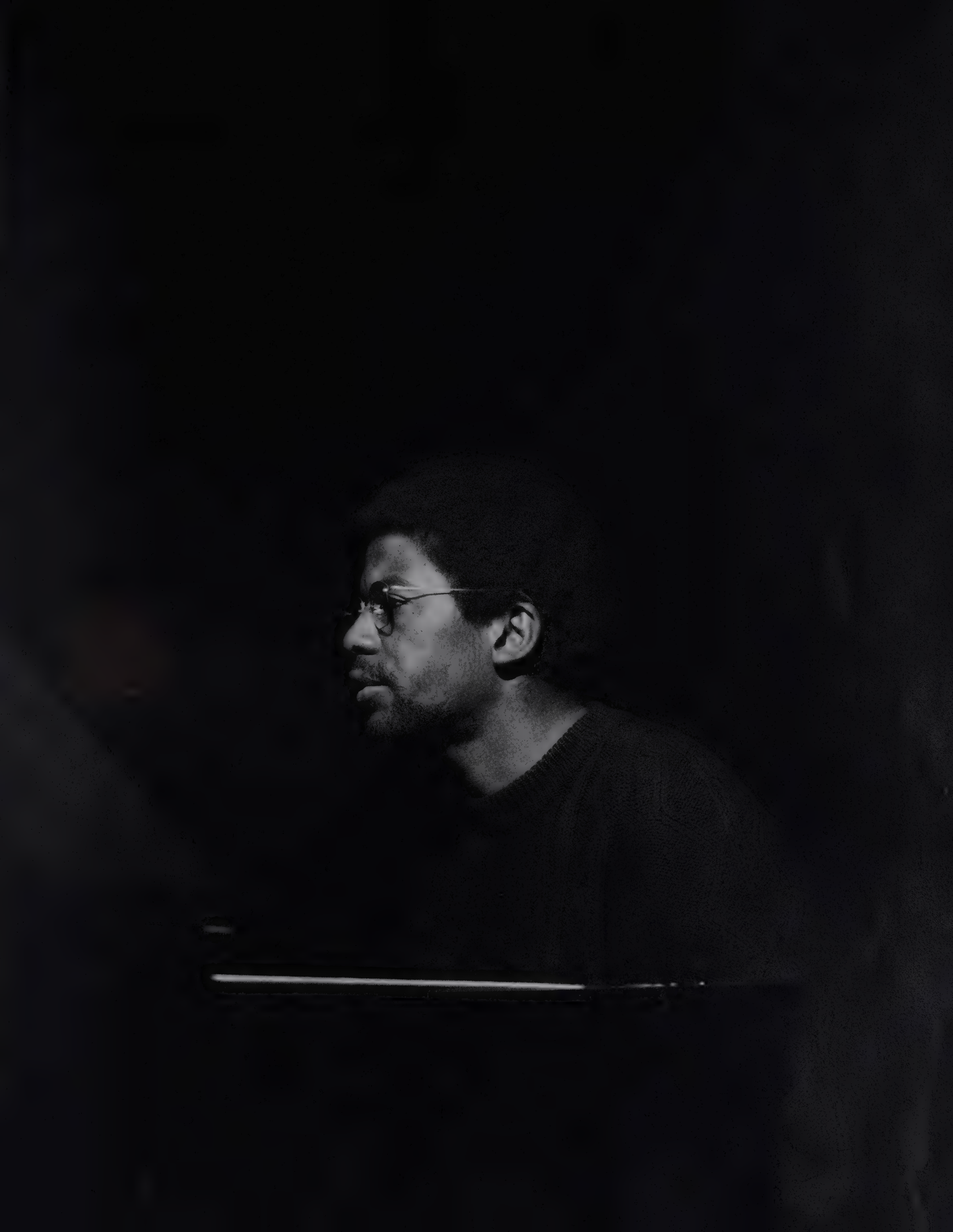
Andrew Hill
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966



◄
Henry Grimes
COMPLETE COMMUNION
Don Cherry
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965

Ken McIntyre
UNIT STRUCTURES
Cecil Taylor
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

Ed Blackwell
COMPLETE COMMUNION
Don Cherry
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1965



Charlie Haden
THE EMPTY FOXHOLE
Ornette Coleman
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

▲
Pharoah Sanders
WHERE IS BROOKLYN?
Don Cherry
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

►►
Richard Davis
OUT TO ŁUNCH
Eric Dolphy
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1964

Sam Rivers
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

CHARISMA
Lee Morgan
Englewood Cliffs, NJ
1966

FRANCIS WOLFF

A Brief Biography

WOLFF WAS A SHY, SOFT-SPOKEN, AND EXTEMELY PRIVATE MAN, CONTENT TO REMAIN IN THE SHADOW OF HIS DYNAMIC PARTNER.

Surprisingly little is known of Francis Wolff's life. Born in Berlin in 1907 or 1908, he enjoyed a comfortable childhood in an environment of academia and the arts. His father, a university mathematics professor, had earned a substantial amount of money on investments. His mother was reputed to be something of a Bohemian and imbued Frank with a taste for the modern and iconoclastic. By his teens, Frank had already discovered his lifelong loves: photography and jazz. At 15, he met Alfred Lion, who lived in the same neighborhood. Alfred was immediately struck by Wolff's worldly, cosmopolitan style of dress. Their shared passion for the new music called jazz was the foundation of a lifelong friendship.

After studying photography in Berlin, Wolff formed a partnership with Lion to buy jewelry wholesale and sell it in Spain. Fortunately for the future of jazz, this short-lived venture was a failure. In 1933, Lion moved on to South America and eventually to New York. Despite the rise of Nazi activity in Germany, Wolff, a Jew, stayed in Berlin, collecting records and pursuing a successful career as a photographer. When the danger became unavoidable, he caught the last direct boat from Berlin to New York in October 1939.

Frank moved into Alfred's small apartment, which was also the office and warehouse for the ten-month-old Blue Note Record label. As Blue Note grew, Frank managed its business affairs. Although photography was no longer his career, he lent his considerable skills to documenting the next twenty-eight years of historic Blue Note recording sessions.

Wolff was a shy, soft-spoken, and extremely private man, content to remain in the shadow of his dynamic partner. His contributions to Blue Note, however, were considerable and crucial.

When Alfred Lion retired in 1967, Frank assumed the role of record producer, and his photographic activity ceased. He stayed at the helm of Blue Note until he died of a heart attack following surgery on March 8, 1971.

Hank Mobley
HANK MOBLEY QUARTET
Hackensack, NJ
1955

ARTIST INDEX

Extended Captions

All photographs are of studio sessions that took place at Rudy Van Gelder's studio, unless otherwise specified. The Van Gelder Studio was located in Hackensack, New Jersey until July 1, 1959. After July 20, 1959, it was located in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. Rehearsals were usually held in New York City at Nola's Studio at 52nd Street and Broadway, or Lynn Oliver's Studio at 96th Street and Broadway.

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b. Highland Park, MI 10/8/30
d. New York, NY 9/10/86
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Donald Bailey
DRUMS
b. Philadelphia, PA 3/26/34
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Gato Barbieri
TENOR SAXOPHONE
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Ed Blackwell
DRUMS
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DRUMS
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Tina Brooks
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b. New York, NY 11/10/39
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d. Los Angeles, CA 9/28/91
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b. Chicago, IL 4/15/30
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d. Berlin, Germany 6/29/64
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45: "The Opener" 6/16/57
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John Gilmore
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VOCAL
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Dexter Gordon
TENOR SAXOPHONE
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b. Chicago, IL 4/16/23
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41: "Walkin' And Talkin'" 1/25/59
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GUITAR
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91: George Braith's "Extension" 3/27/64
95: "The Latin Bit" 4/26/62
155: Hank Mobley's "Workout" 3/26/61

Sonny Greenwich
GUITAR
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Johnny Griffin
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BASS
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Charlie Haden
BASS
b. Shenandoah, IL 8/6/37
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Herbie Hancock
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Gene Harris
PIANO
b. Benton Harbor, MI 9/1/33
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Jimmy Heath
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. Philadelphia, PA 10/25/26
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Joe Henderson
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. Lima, OH 4/24/37
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Billy Higgins
DRUMS
b. Los Angeles, CA 10/11/36
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Andrew Hill
PIANO
b. Chicago, IL 6/30/37
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Milt Hinton
BASS
b. Vicksburg, MS 6/23/10
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Freddie Hubbard
TRUMPET
b. Indianapolis, IN 4/7/38
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181: Andrew Hill's "Compulsion" 10/8/65

Bobby Hutcherson
VIBES, MARIMBA
b. Los Angeles, CA 1/27/41
Page 14: Grant Green's "Idle Moments" 11/4/63 or 11/15/63
119: Joe Henderson's "Mode For Joe" 1/27/66
185: Grachan Moncur III's "Evolution" 11/21/63

Fred Jackson
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. probably Atlanta, GA 1931
Page 84: "Hootin' 'N Tootin'" 2/5/62

Milt Jackson
VIBES
b. Detroit, MI 1/1/23
Page 27: "Hank Mobley And His All Stars" 1/13/57

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b. Montgomery, AL 8/7/41
Page 138: Hank Mobley's "A Slice Of The Top" 3/18/66

J. J. Johnson
TROMBONE
b. Indianapolis, IN 1/22/24
Page 53: Rehearsal for "The Eminent J. J. Johnson" session of 6/22/53

Carmell Jones
TRUMPET
b. Kansas City, KS 7/19/36
Page 159: Horace Silver's "Song For My Father" 10/26/64

Elvin Jones
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Sam Jones
BASS
b. Jacksonville, FL 11/12/24
d. New York, NY 12/15/81
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Thad Jones
TRUMPET
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d. Copenhagen, Denmark 8/20/86
Page 43: "The Magnificent Thad Jones" 2/2/57

Clifford Jordan
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. Chicago, IL 9/2/31
d. New York, NY 3/27/93
Page 32: "Blowing In From Chicago" 3/3/57

Wynton Kelly
PIANO
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d. Toronto, Canada 4/12/71
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Melvin Lastie, Sr.
CORNET
b. New Orleans, LA 11/18/30
d. New Orleans, LA, mid-1970s
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Yusef Lateef
FLUTE, TENOR SAXOPHONE
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Alfred Lion
PRODUCER
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12: Horace Parlan's "On The Spur Of The Moment" 3/18/61
86: Grant Green's "Feelin' The Spirit" 12/21/62

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TROMBONE, ARRANGER
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Page 108: Present at Freddie Hubbard's "Hub Cap" session, 4/9/61

Harold Mabern
PIANO
b. Memphis, TN 3/20/36
Page 145: Hank Mobley's "Dippin'" 6/18/65

Jack McDuff
ORGAN
b. Champaign, IL 9/17/26
Page 85: Grant Green's "Grantstand" 8/1/61

Eddie McFadden
GUITAR
b. Baltimore, MD 8/6/28
Page 77: Jimmy Smith's "The Sounds Of Jimmy Smith" Manhattan Towers, New York, NY, 2/12/57

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ALTO SAXOPHONE, OBOE, BASS CLARINET
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ALTO SAXOPHONE
b. New York, NY 5/17/32
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147: "A Fickle Sonance" 10/26/61
174: Grachan Moncur III's "Evolution" 11/21/63

Jymie Merritt
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b. Philadelphia, PA 5/3/26
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113: Art Blakey's "A Night In Tunisia" 8/7/60

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d. Los Angeles, CA 5/21/79
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29: "Poppin'" 10/20/57
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50: Johnny Griffin's "A Blowing Session" 4/6/57
105: "A Caddy For Daddy" 12/18/65
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142: "The Turnaround" 2/5/65
145: "Dippin'" 6/18/65
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TROMBONE
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TRUMPET
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35: "City Lights" 8/25/57
105: Hank Mobley's "A Caddy For Daddy" 12/18/65
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Page 92: Lou Donaldson's "Alligator Bogaloo" 4/7/67

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PIANO
b. New York, NY 12/3/19
d. New York, NY 4/12/63
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Leo Parker
BARITONE SAXOPHONE
b. Washington, DC 4/18/25
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Page 132: "Rollin' With Leo" 10/20/61

Horace Parlan
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b. Pittsburgh, PA 1/19/31
Page 12: "On The Spur Of The Moment" 3/18/61

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ORGAN
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84: "Oh Baby!" 3/8/65

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BASS
b. Burley, ID 5/12/35
Page 189: Tony Williams's "Life Time" 8/21/64

Duke Pearson
PIANO
b. Atlanta, GA 8/17/32
d. Atlanta, GA 8/4/80
Page 149: Present at Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" session, 3/17/65
174: Present at Grachan Moncur III's "Evolution" session, 11/21/63

Oscar Pettiford
BASS
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62: "Kenny Burrell, Volume Two" Audio Video Studios, New York, NY, 3/12/56

Bud Powell
PIANO
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Page 106: With son, John Earl Powell, at rehearsal for "The Scene Changes" session, Birdland, New York, NY, 12/58
107: Rehearsal for "The Scene Changes" session, Birdland, New York, NY, 12/58

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b. Newark, NJ 8/17/18
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Page 78: "Heavy Soul" 11/26/61
79: Ike Quebec Quartet 45 singles session, 9/25/60
121: "Blue And Sentimental" 12/16/61

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b. Austin, TX 4/4/13
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b. Indianapolis, IN 9/3/37
Page 117: Jackie McLean's "Destination Out" 9/20/63

Sam Rivers
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ORGAN
b. Bronx, NY 5/11/31
d. Paris, France (date unknown)
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Max Roach
DRUMS
b. New Land, NC 1/10/24
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b. New York, NY 9/9/30
Page 44: "Sonny Rollins, Volume One" 12/16/56
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Charlie Rouse
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. Washington, DC 4/6/24
d. Seattle, WA 11/30/88
Page 148: Rejected session of 4/17/63

Pharoah Sanders
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. Little Rock, AR 10/13/40
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b. Philadelphia, PA 3/14/34
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TENOR SAXOPHONE
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Page 10: "Et Cetera" 6/14/65
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134: Lee Morgan's "Search For The New Land" 2/15/64
153: Art Blakey's "The Big Beat" 3/6/60

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b. Norwalk, CT 9/2/28
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26: "J. R. Monterose" 10/21/56
52: Rehearsal for Kenny Dorham's "Afro Cuban" session of 1/30/55
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Andy Simpkins
BASS
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Jimmy Smith
ORGAN
b. Norristown, PA 12/8/25
Page 15: "The Sermon" Manhattan Towers, New York, NY, 2/25/58
67: Unissued session, Manhattan Towers, New York, NY, 11/20/57
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Steve Swallow
BASS
b. Fair Lawn, NJ 10/4/40
Page 146: Pete La Roca's "Basra" 5/19/65

Bill Swindell
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. (unknown)
Page 151: Leo Parker's "Rollin' With Leo" 10/20/61

Art Taylor
DRUMS
b. New York, NY 4/6/29
d. New York, NY 2/6/95
Page 37: Curtis Fuller's "Bone & Bari" 8/5/57

Cecil Taylor
PIANO
b. New York, NY 3/15/29
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PIANO
b. Philadelphia, PA 12/19/35
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133: Art Blakey's "A Night In Tunisia" 8/7/60

Charles Tolliver
TRUMPET
b. Jacksonville, FL 3/6/42
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Stanley Turrentine
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. Pittsburgh, PA 4/5/34
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75: Jimmy Smith session, 6/13/60
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McCoy Tyner
PIANO
b. Philadelphia, PA 12/11/38
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136: Freddie Hubbard's "Ready For Freddie" 8/21/61
141: Stanley Turrentine's "The Spoiler" 9/22/66

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TENOR SAXOPHONE
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d. New York, NY 11/13/87
p. 76: John Patton's "Along Came John" 4/5/63

Freddie Waits
DRUMS
b. Jackson, MS 4/27/43
d. New York, NY 11/18/89
Page 136: Donald Byrd's "Mustang" 6/24/66

Wilbur Ware
BASS
b. Chicago, IL 9/8/32
d. Philadelphia, PA 9/9/79
Page 32: "J. R. Monterose" 10/21/56

Quentin Warren
GUITAR
b. probably Washington, DC 1940
Page 69: Jimmy Smith's "Rockin' The Boat" 2/7/63

Tyrone Washington
TENOR SAXOPHONE
b. Blakely, GA 1944
Page 150: Horace Silver's "The Jody Grind" 11/23/66

Randy Weston
PIANO
b. New York, NY 4/6/26
Page 108: Present at Freddie Hubbard's "Hub Cap" session 4/9/61

Baby Face Willette
ORGAN
b. New Orleans, LA 9/11/33
d. fate unknown
Page 64: "Face To Face" 1/30/61

Tony Williams
DRUMS
b. Chicago, IL 12/12/45
Page 111: At the Village Vanguard, NYC, 9/65
176, 179: Eric Dolphy's "Out To Lunch" 2/25/64

Francis Wolff
PHOTOGRAPHER, PRODUCER
b. Berlin, Germany 1907/08
d. New York, NY 3/8/71
Page 197: Unknown location

Reggie Workman
BASS
b. Philadelphia, PA 6/26/37
Page 128: Wayne Shorter's "JuJu" 8/3/64

Larry Young
ORGAN
b. Newark, NJ 10/7/40
d. New York, NY 3/30/78
Page 11: "Into Somethin'" 11/12/64

Kiane Zawadi, née Bernard McKinney
EUPHONIUM
b. Detroit, MI 11/26/32
Page 122: Freddie Hubbard's "Ready For Freddie" 8/21/61
138: Hank Mobley's "A Slice Of The Top" 3/18/66

Authors Michael Cuscuna and Charlie Lourie have extensive backgrounds in the music industry. In 1984, Cuscuna was asked to help revitalize the Blue Note Record label. He has since been musical consultant for the film Round Midnight, producer of the Mount Fuji Jazz Festival, and coordinator of reissues at Impulse Records. Charlie Lourie has been a marketing executive at Columbia Records, Director of Marketing for Blue Note Records, and head of the jazz department at Warner Bros. Records. In 1982 Lourie and Cuscuna founded Mosaic Records, a label committed to reissuing classic jazz recordings—many of which were originally recorded by Blue Note.

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Jacket design by Oscar Schnider Design, Inc.

[illegible]TERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS, INC.
[illegible] Avenue South, New York, NY 10010

[illegible]d by St. Martin's Press

[illegible] China

Public Library of Nashville & Davidson County
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ISBN 0-8478-1912-4 $65.00
9 780847 819126 96500 >